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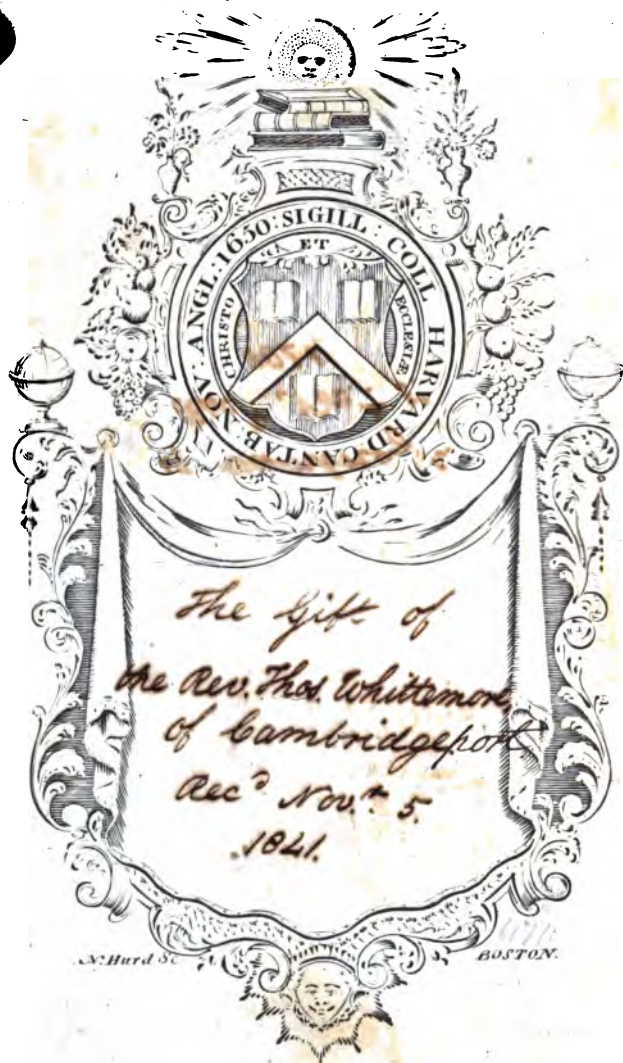
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Thos Whittemore
to
Harvard College

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S E L E C T

S E R M O N S,

DELIVERED ON

VARIOUS OCCASIONS,

FROM

IMPORTANT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

BY HOSEA BALLOU,

PASTOR OF THE SECOND UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY IN BOSTON.

BOSTON:

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Rev. Thos. Whittemore

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IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE, BUT AFTER THIS
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SERMON I.

**"IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MAN ONCE TO DIE, BUT AFTER
THIS THE JUDGMENT."**



DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE SECOND SABBATH IN FEB. 1818.



HEB. IX. 27, 28

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

BEING sensible that the common opinion entertained of this portion of divine truth, is in a very important sense different from what I am fully persuaded the Apostle designed to communicate, it seems reasonable that the hearer should be advertised of this circumstance in the introduction of the subject. If the audience should pass the time of the introduction with minds directed to, and possessed of the general opinion of a day of judgment in a future state, which is the subject to which our text is applied, by almost universal consent, it might be difficult for the hearer to undergo so great a transition at once, as would be required, in order to gain a clear view of the true sense of the passage under consideration.

In order, therefore, that the candid inquirer after truth, should not be too much embarrassed with traditional notions on this subject, it is thought expedient to bring the general opinion of the text first into view, and expose its improprieties, so that the mind, being satisfied, in some degree at least, of the error of the commonly

received opinion, may be the more easily conducted to the right sense of the text.

This part of duty is always attended with some unpleasant sensations to the labourer. He feels the necessity of approaching this work with caution. In performing this, he well knows that there is danger of wounding those who are involved in the error to be corrected, and the delicate ear which shrinks from the language of controversy.

But notwithstanding all difficulties, necessary labour must be done and done faithfully. An architect whom you might see fit to employ to repair your house, might, on due examination, find that the labour and expense of repairing would be surely lost, for want of soundness in the foundation; and however disagreeable it might be to you to hear it, or to him to declare it, yet it would be most consistent with your interest and his duty.

But it is hard to give up the ancient, the venerable, though decayed building. The habitations of our fathers hold our fond hearts with a sort of charm that is not easily broken. But from this digression we may return to our subject.

This passage read for our present consideration, as has already been hinted, is generally applied to the subject of a day of judgment, in a future state, when and where all mankind will be brought to trial, duly examined, judged and rewarded according to their works in this mortal life. Some of the absurdities of this notion of a future judgment, I have pointed out in a discourse which I recently delivered in this house, and which has since been published. That sermon, having stirred up the minds of the thoughtful, has thereby, been the means of calling our present subject into consideration; which gives me another occasion to attend to this very important inquiry.

As this judgment is supposed to mean a decision to be formed, on due examination and investigation of character and conduct, how it is possible

for one who knew all things from the beginning, to be the judge in such a case? Is it reasonable to suppose that the divine Being has got to make up his judgment hereafter on the just deserts of his dependent offsprings? It is confidently believed, that no reasonable person on due consideration, can suppose that the infinitely wise and omniscient Deity will ever set, like a judge on his bench, to examine evidences for and against his creatures in order to make up his mind and judgment concerning their merits and demerits. Our creator must have known, before man was formed of the dust of the ground, all the future thoughts and actions of the numerous sons and daughters of Adam, to the latest generation which shall inhabit the earth. How preposterously erroneous are the declarations of enthusiasts, who, to operate on the weakness of credulity, have threatened their hearers of witnessing against them at the bar of God! As if the Almighty, having difficult cases to determine, will have occasion to call on them to testify in evidence! All this goes down very well with two classes of people; (viz.) those who believe every thing the preacher says on his authority, and those who care nothing about religion, and never go to the house of worship with other than worldly motives.

It was asked, in the sermon before alluded to, whether at the great day, so much talked of, those poor wretched immortals, who had lived in the torments of hell thousands of years, would then be permitted to have their trial? It was also asked, if those who had been in heaven for ages and ages, would at the day of judgment, be put to the tribunal for adjudication? These questions may be called by hard names without being answered.

St. Paul was the author of our text; we may therefore inquire how this notion of a future day of judgment agrees with what he says in other passages. See Phil. i. 23, "For I am in a strait

betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ ; which is far better." How could the Apostle determine whether he was to be with Christ ? If he believed that he had got to have his trial in another world, was it his province to determine what the final issue would be ? See again, 2d Cor. v. 1, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." How could the Apostle decide on this infinitely important subject until after the day of judgment ? If St. Paul knew how the case would be decided, did not the judge know ? If the judge knew and informed the Apostle, the conclusion is, there could be no further adjudication relative to the case.

This Apostle, when treating more largely and more particularly on the subject of the resurrection, in 1st Cor. 15, than he or any other divine author has done in the scriptures, mentions not one word about any judgment. He says, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.—And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Here your servant fervently calls for more than ordinary attention. He submits to his christian brethren and hearers the weighty question, (viz.) has the Apostle given the least reason to believe, that after this infinitely glorious resurrection, into IMMORTALITY, INCORRUPTION AND GLORY, there will be, in this immortal state, a day of judgment and retribution according to the works of men in this mortal corruptible state ? This question is on the merits of our subject.

The scriptures inform us of a salvation "not according to our works:" they speak of the justifi-

cation of sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, &c. Now if sinners are to be condemned and punished in another world according to their conduct in this, when and where are they justified freely by the grace of God? When and where are they saved, not according to their works? Jesus said to the unbelieving Sadducees who denied the resurrection, Matt. 22, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven." So much the blessed Redeemer informed them, but gave no intimation, that after men were raised from the dead and were made like unto the Angels of God in heaven, they would be judged and punished for their follies in flesh and blood. He has never informed us, that the immortal state will have to endure the punishment due to crimes committed in a state of mortality.

As the limits of a sermon will by no means admit of noticing all that belongs to this argument, and believing that the hearer must be, measurably, if not fully satisfied that wrong notions have been entertained concerning a day of judgment in another world, we come to consider our text according to the connection in which it is found.

Writing to the Hebrews, the Apostle very prudently endeavours to lead their minds into the true knowledge of Christ, by using the rites of the law dispensation, to which they were religiously attached, to represent Jesus and his ministry of reconciliation. In our context he draws a parallel between the high priest under the law, and the great Apostle and high priest of our christian profession; and between the holy place under the Levitical priesthood, and the holy place, even heaven itself, into which Jesus entered for us. See verse 23. "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things them

selves with better sacrifices than these." Here we see the Apostle's attempt to lead the minds of his brethren from the sacrifices under the law, to a better sacrifice. He allows the sacrifices offered by the law, to be no more than figures, and the things which were purified with blood only as patterns of things in the heavens. See verse 24. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Here our author represents the holy places under the law, into which the high priest entered, as figures of the true, and heaven itself into which Jesus entered for us, as the holy place represented by those figures. Verses 25, 26, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world,) but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." By the foundation of the world, the Apostle means the commencement of the legal priesthood or dispensation; and by the end of the world, he means the end of that dispensation or priesthood.

We have here represented the entering of Jesus into the holy place, which was represented by the holy places under the law, by his own blood, as the high priest entered into the figurative holy places with the blood of others.

Here carefully notice. In order that the high priest might represent the death and resurrection of Jesus, he must first offer a sacrifice for himself; so that with this blood he might enter the holy place. He figuratively died when his sacrifice was slain; and his entry into the holy place represented him as risen from the dead. Thus here-presented Jesus, who should actually die and rise again.

Now notice the text: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die;" that is; as it is appointed

unto men who are high priests to die in their sacrifices. "And after this the judgment;" that is, the holy place. "So Christ was once offered;" that is, as the figurative death of the high priest represented; to bear the sins of many;" of both Jews and Gentiles. "And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time;" that is, in his risen glory. "Without sin unto salvation;" as the high priest appeared in the holy place for the justification of the people of Israel.

In order to illustrate and make our subject still plainer, we will endeavour to show the true meaning of the word *judgment* in our text, by referring to its use in Exodus 28, where it is used on the same subject.

In Aaron's breast-plate were twelve manner of precious stones; in these stones were engraved the names of the twelve tribes. On each shoulder he had an onyx stone. On these likewise were engraved the names of the twelve tribes; six on one and six on the other. On a plate of pure gold which he wore on his mitre, was engraved HOLINESS TO THE LORD. In the hem of his garment or robe round about were interspersed golden bells and pomegranates; so that when he went into the holy place, and when he came out, the sound of the golden bells was heard, by which the people knew that their high priest lived before the Lord. The breast-plate which contained the names of the twelve tribes is called "the breast-plate of *judgment*." See verses 29, 30, "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the urim and the thummim; (light and perfection) and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually."

Can there be a reasonable doubt entertained, that the word *judgment* in our text means the same as in the passage quoted? And is it not evident that this word means HOLINESS, LIGHT AND PERFECTION?

As the antitype of the high priest and his functions, Jesus, having by his cross, broken down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, entered the holy place, which is heaven itself, bearing the whole human family on his shoulders and on his heart; and presented them HOLINESS TO THE LORD, in himself, who is the Lord our righteousness. And thus he bears the *judgment*, the *justification*, the *light* and *perfection* of all men before his Father continually.

Now unto them that look for him by faith, he appears without sin. They behold in him the whole human family, glowing in the light and perfection of divine holiness. They hear the joyful sound of the gospel, of peace on earth and good will towards men, answering to the sound of the golden bells in the hem of the high priest's robe; and the fruit of the spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, meakness, goodness and faith, answers to the pomegranates interspersed among the golden bells.

In this clear light of our subject, we may ask, if there could be an invention more averse to divine truth, than the one to which our text has been generally applied?

In room of noticing the death of the high priest, represented by the death of his sacrifice, our text has been applied to the natural death of all the individuals of mankind; and in the room of regarding the judgment as the justification of those, whom the high priest bore upon his shoulders and on his heart, it has been made to signify a trial of all men in another world according to their works in this.

This justification signified by the word judgment in our text, is expressed by this same Apostle in

Romans 3d chapter, thus ; “ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” And again, in chapter 5th, Thus ; “ Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” It must surely be a most gross perversion, so to construe the word of God as to represent that dispensation which “justifies the ungodly,” and saves men, “not according to our works ; but according to his own purpose and grace ;” in which dispensation, the Apostle says, “God was in Christ ; reconciling the world unto himself,” not imputing their trespasses unto them, as a dispensation designed to judge and reward men in another world, according to their works in this.

Christian brethren, is it not the duty of every lover of the gospel of divine mercy, who feels under infinite obligation to his Blessed Redeemer, to consider this subject as deserving of due attention and special labour ? Let the lovers of popularity, and those who seek honour one of another, devote their learning, study, and labours to quiet the people in superstition, bigotry, and error. There are enough in the employment. But whoever prizes the truth as it is in Jesus, above the fascinating charms of worldly wisdom and the flattery of carnal minds, will not shun to remove the vail from the public mind, and let the true light shine in every dark place.

Before we dismiss the word *judgment*, it may not be amiss, further to confirm the explanation already given, to notice how the prophet Isaiah uses the word when speaking of the Messiah. See chapter xlii. 1, 2, 3. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the

street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for his law."

This judgment which the Mediator has brought forth unto the Gentiles, is that peace which our Apostle says was preached to the Ephesians, who were far off, but made nigh by the blood of Christ. And the prophet clearly expresses this judgment in the place from which we have quoted ; see verses 6, 7. " I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Will any one seriously contend, that all this means that Christ should judge the Gentiles in another world, and there punish them according to the sins they had committed in this ? Is this bringing the prisoners out of the prison house, consistent with putting sinners into the prison of hell in another world ? This would be as the prophet Amos says, turning " judgment into hemlock."

Having presented the hearer with what appears to be the meaning of the Apostle where he says in our text ; " And as it is appointed unto men once to die, &c." for the sake of more light still on the subject, we will admit that St. Paul meant that it is appointed unto all men to die a natural death, this being the general sentiment on the passage. But what consequence would follow ? Answer ; a more entire defeat of the argument for a punishment in a future state. For in this way of understanding the text, the natural death of all men, both saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, is used as a figure of the death of Christ. Notice the words *as* and *so*. *As* it is appointed unto men once to die—*so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, &c. And as it has been proved, be

yond contradiction, that the word *judgment* in the text, means HOLINESS TO THE LORD, so in this way, it would be proved that all men, saints and sinners, believers and unbelievers, at death are presented holy to God.

But let it be distinctly understood, that this is not allowed to be the true sense of the text. We do not feel authorised to apply our text to a future state, but to the gospel dispensation, in which it is declared, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And which dispensation and ministry are designed to quicken those who are dead in sins into newness of life, and bring the unreconciled to experimental reconciliation to God, until which no man can have that peace which is in believing, nor that joy which is in the holy ghost.

Before this discourse is closed, it is necessary to make some remarks on what the opposers are endeavouring to insinuate against these plain and glorious truths of the gospel.

They are not disposed to meet these things in the way of open and candid investigation ; but they will go from house to house, and from ear to ear, and whisper about licentious doctrine. They will endeavour to stop the people's ears and blind their eyes, lest they hear with their ears, and see with their eyes and be converted.

What, no future judgment ! Is there to be no distinction in the world to come, between the righteous and the wicked ? Are saints and sinners all to fare alike ? It is then no matter what we do ? We may indulge without restraint in all manner of iniquity. We may neglect the duties of religion ; lie, steal, defraud ; indulge in drunkenness and gluttony, together with base uncleanness, and all is just as well. Nay, better ; for who, were it not for the terrors of condemnation in a future state, would be at the expense and trouble of public worship and religious duties, or refrain from

the indulgence of sensuality? Such is the dust these enemies of the gospel throw into the air.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Notice carefully; "he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." He must receive his wages from the master he serves; he must reap his harvest where he sows his seed.

Go to our prisons and places of correction; you will find hundreds who believe in a day of judgment in the next world, and have no doubts that punishment everlasting will be inflicted on the wicked, accordingly as they have been educated to believe; but they all intend to repent before they die, and that is early enough according to the argument of our opposers. These miserable wretches believe as they have been taught; and they act as if they were fully convinced, that religion, virtue, justice, temperance and godliness were nothing but so many obstructions to their present happiness, and of no use this side the eternal world. O fatal delusion! "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depth of hell." These sinful riots are in the darkest regions of hell.

Look round on society. Do misery and wretchedness mark the footsteps of religion, virtue, temperance, prudence, industry, economy, justice, love and mercy? No, my brethren, this is not the case. But it remains true that "the way of the transgressor is hard," and that "there is no peace to the wicked."

The religion of Jesus is represented by many beautiful figures; such as bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, a feast of fat things for all people.

Would a hungry person refuse a feast of fat things unless he were threatened with everlasting condemnation in the future state ? Would one on the burning sands of Arabia, parched with thirst and scorched with a vertical sun, on finding the shadow of a great rock, at whose base flows a living spring, refuse this exquisite refreshment, unless he were threatened with everlasting torments in another world ?

Are these figures, which the holy ghost has used to represent the peace there is in believing, and the joys which are in the holy spirit of Jesus, at all too strong ? Do they, my brethren, represent true religion to be better than you have found it ? St. Paul speaks of setting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus . Would he have been glad to leave these heavenly places to go and indulge in all manner of vice and dissipation, were it not for the fear of condemnation hereafter ? No, the real disciple of Jesus acts from higher and better motives.

After all, what is this religion which is founded on the fear of future misery ? Is there any real sincerity in it ? Is there any of the true love of God in this religion ? "Perfect love casts out fear ; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." You provide for your companions and your dependent offspring because you love them, and your duty is perfect delight. Can you honestly say, that you would not give your children bread when they are hungry, if you were not afraid of everlasting punishment hereafter ?

Away with this deception. Let us learn to love God because he has first loved us ; let us cautiously obey his commandments, in keeping of which there is great reward.

S E R M O N I I .

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE FOURTH SABBATH IN JULY, 1818.

HEBREWS, XII. 2.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

By casting an eye on the context, it is at once discovered, that the design of the Apostle was to induce his christian brethren to steadfastness and perseverance in the christian profession. That he might the better succeed in this most laudable attempt, he sets before them certain characters as examples. He adverted to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; Joseph, Moses, &c. and finally, he comes to Jesus, as the chief of all, as to a perfect directory.

Much might be said on the great propriety of the Apostle's method here observed. Nothing is more serviceable in pointing out the duties involved in any profession, nor is there any thing more powerful to incite to the performance of such duties, than example. The examples set forth in the context, seem admirably calculated to give us just conceptions of the real object of the christian dispensation, the duties incumbent on its votaries, and the reward held out to induce the professor to faithfulness.

The design of this Sermon, as a distinct object, is to settle a question respecting the great influen-

tial object held as a reward for christian labours and christian sufferings.

It is a most reasonable thing, that a reasonable reward should be expected for services of all kinds, and it is equally as absurd to expect faithfulness in ourselves or in others, without the expectation of an adequate reward, as it is to promise ourselves a compensation for services infinitely greater than such services can merit.

Should the labourer, whom you might employ, absurdly calculate, that at the close of day he should be put in possession of your whole estate, as a righteous compensation for his day's work, he would, no doubt, be offended, should one inform him that no such reward would be allowed for his services. And it is evident, that his absurd calculation, in this case, is the cause of his disappointment. If he had been reasonable in his expectations, he would have been satisfied with a compensation proportioned to his services. So, when christian professors promise themselves immortality and eternal life, as a recompense for their labours in the cause of religion, they prepare themselves to be disappointed. They infinitely overrate their work. Nor will they at once be satisfied by being told, that though their good works can never merit the expected reward, yet shall they receive a reasonable compensation for all their services, and for all their sufferings; and moreover, that what they had expected as a compensation for their work, they have as a gift of God; not because they merit it, but because it was the will of our Heavenly father to give unto us eternal life in his son. The reason why this information is not satisfactory is, because if works cannot merit immortality and eternal life, and if God has been graciously pleased to give mankind this invaluable inheritance in Christ Jesus, then those who have no good works to recommend them, are equal heirs with themselves.

This is too humiliating. What, shall our wick-

ed, unbelieving, unconverted, unregenerated neighbours be clothed in the beautiful robes of immortality, and shine as brilliantly in the righteousness of God in the eternal world as we? We who have borne the burden and heat of the day, we who have been regenerated and born of the spirit, who have believed in Jesus and laboured in his cause, are we to be placed on a level with these spiritually blind, halt, and leprous? Could we be persuaded into this belief, we would at once forsake the religion of Christ, his divine commands we would treat with utter neglect, our sinful propensities should all be gratified, and sensual indulgence should be our constant employ. The sabbath, the sanctuary, the holy services of devotion would be all beneath our notice, there would be left no inducement to deny ourselves and to bear the cross of Christ. In one word, if you take away the awful penalty of eternal punishment for unbelief and sin, we would not believe in Jesus, nor would we obey his laws. The substance of all this, my brethren, is constantly held up and earnestly contended for by the professed enemies of the faith we profess, and the holy vocation to which we have been called. The foregoing insinuations are practised on minds naturally feeble and habitually timid; the fond, the pious matron is told, that if the dreadful penalty of endless punishment be not enforced on the minds of her sons and daughters, she has no right to expect them to be either religious or virtuous. It is contended that this penalty is an indispensable requisition, in the cause of religion and morality, and that to deny it is to open the door of impiety, and every sinful practice.

Let us ask the question, whether the author and finisher of our faith undertook the work of man's redemption, whether he faithfully laboured and suffered in this cause under the penalty of eternal condemnation. Did he behold in his adorable father a lowering vengeance which threatened his

eternal banishment from his father and his God, if he refused the mighty undertaking? It can hardly be necessary to explain how this question relates to our subject. The hearer already discovers, that if such a penalty was not necessary in the commencement of this ministration, it cannot be in the prosecution of it; if it was unnecessary to induce the captain of our salvation, why is it necessary to engage the disciple?

Surely it was not to purchase his father's love, that the son of God condescended to become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, for this he fully possessed before. The testimony of the father is, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Not to purchase eternal glory, life, and immortality, did Jesus undertake the work of man's salvation; for of all this was he an heir before the foundation of the world. Never did the blessed redeemer inform his disciples that the dreadful penalty of everlasting destruction lay before him; and that to avoid the indescribable catastrophe he must do the whole work of him who sent him. And as he gave no intimation of any such penalty for himself, so he never made use of it as a mean to induce any one to become his disciple, or to continue faithful to his cause.

But why was this penalty unnecessary to engage the captain of our salvation, to undertake, and to prosecute effectually our redemption? Answer: the love which he had for our sinful world, was sufficient to induce him to give himself a ransom for all men. If it be an undeniable maxim with the philosopher, that in accounting for any of the phenomena of nature, no more cause should ever be sought than what is adequate to the effect, may we not with equal propriety contend, that if we have found a sufficient cause for any of the divine phenomena of the dispensation of grace, we expose ourselves to err by seeking after other causes in the regions of imagination;

The scriptures account for the cause of man's redemption as follows : "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." Because God loved us he sent his son to be every thing to us, which by grace he is made ; such as "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." And as this love in God towards man was sufficient to produce this unspeakably glorious event, there was no need of any other cause, no other can be found. No other can possibly exist. For if this cause was sufficient, and did produce the effect, it was not produced by a different cause. As a motive which moved Jesus to die for man, the divine testimony explicitly declares, that "he loved us and gave himself for us." The love of Christ to sinners, is assigned as the cause, which moved him to give himself for us. If this was the cause, and if this cause did produce in him a willingness, then we have no occasion to seek for any other ; nor can there be any other cause, that is, no other distinct from this.

What was the "joy that was set before him," for which he "endured the cross, despising the shame?" It was the accomplishment of the glorious object for which he laboured. "He loved the Church and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The joy that was set before him, was a world redeemed, sanctified, cleansed, and glorified in the Lord our righteousness. This object perfectly answered to the love which he had for the world ; it was all his love for us desired. And when in pursuit of this soul rejoicing object, and in possession of full assurance respecting obtaining the end of his labours and sufferings, he despised all the shame, all the contempt and abuse which he received from his enemies.

This consummate joy which was set before Jesus rendered all his labours and all his sufferings his meat and his drink. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "We have seen and do testify, that the father sent the son to be the Saviour of the world." "He shall save his people from their sins." "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son." "For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." That is, saved from sin, from unbelief, from idolatry, from moral darkness, and all the evils of unreconciliation to God. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses."

It may be proper to remark, that the Saviour was appointed, not to prevent the wicked from becoming blind, or the transgressor from going into prison, but "to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that set in darkness out of the prison house." The Saviour's grace was not designed to prevent that death which was the curse of the law from coming upon the transgressor, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Such was the object of the Saviour's labours and sufferings, and such was the joy and reward set before him, concerning which it is written, "He shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied, for by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

We may now advert to some of the examples which the Apostle has seen fit to associate in our context. For instance, Abraham: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of prom-

ise as in a strange country ; dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob : for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." " By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promise offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called ; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure." Was Abraham threatened with eternal condemnation, with everlasting torments in the future world if he refused to obey God ? Did the God of Abraham put him on trial between the penalty of eternal misery, or the offering up of Isaac ? Have we the least intimation that Abraham's faith or obedience was the effect of such a penalty ? Surely we have not. Abraham's faith was the effect of the divine promise, accompanied with miraculous evidence, and his obedience was the effect of his love of God, and his confidence in his unalterable word. He was fully persuaded, that he who had promised him his son, and had fulfilled that promise notwithstanding the natural improbability of the event, could if he pleased, raise the darling of his soul from death, and make him a great nation, and in him bless all the nations of the earth.

Perhaps our limits will allow us to notice what is said of Moses. " By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches, than the treasures in Egypt. How shall we account for this remarkable choice of Moses ? When an infant he was lodged among the flags, by the brink of the Nile, while his little sister Miriam watched afar off to see what would be the fate of the child. There lay the future Saviour and deliverer of his people. Pharaoh's daughter came to the place,

heaven directed her; she found the infant, and had compassion on it; she nursed it, and it became her son. He was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, at that time the most learned nation on earth. The honours and favours of the court were his. Whatever is calculated to flatter the vanity of youth, feed the natural pride of the human heart, and influence ambition, were at his devotion. From moving in such a circle of honour, what could induce him? He looked on the sufferings of his brethren, he saw them in the "iron furnace" of affliction, the soul of philanthropy, of the genuine patriot, was moved with compassion's irresistible force. He chose his lot with his people.

At the special command of God, and under his divine direction, he undertook and finally accomplished the redemption of the family of promise. Here let us ask, did Moses refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, chuse to suffer affliction with the people of God in preference to enjoying the treasures of Egypt, undertake at the command of God the deliverance of Israel under the penalty of eternal misery in the future world? Is there in the whole account we have of these remarkable events any intimation that Moses was threatened with this endless torture in the coming world, which is now held up by professed ministers of gospel grace, as an indispensable foundation of faith, piety and virtue?

Was Moses promised the reward of immortality and eternal life as a compensation for his obedience? We surely have no such account. But we are informed that "he had respect to the recompense of reward." What was this reward? That which was promised him by the angel of God in Mount Horeb; it was that he should deliver his people from bondage, and bring them into the land of promise. And when this servant of God was so happy as to realize that all Israel were landed on the opposite shore of the Red Sea, from Egypt,

and that their enemies were destroyed, he and all Israel sang unto the Lord a song of deliverance. This was a reasonable and fully adequate recompence of reward. He now beheld nearly three millions of people, who were but a few hours before abject slaves, free and independent. Can we, without doing violence to our own understandings, pretend that this reward was not a compensation fully adequate to the sacrifices which Moses had made in refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and for the afflictions which he suffered with the people of God? Is there a real patriot in the world who would not do as much for his country for such a reward?

Such, my brethren, are the examples which a divinely inspired Apostle has presented us, as patterns for our imitation. And now, let us carefully and with due attention look unto Abraham, let us look unto Moses, and, above all, let us look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Did those ancient worthies, did this perfect directory set us an example? Shall we then contend that the motives and rewards which were sufficient to produce such examples of faith, of piety, of patience, of labour, of sufferings, and of every virtue honourable to God and profitable to man, are insufficient to produce in us an humble imitation of such examples? Shall we turn from such incitements, and seek in the wisdom of this world for an eternal, unmerciful penalty, on which to form a system of terror, contrived by priestcraft to make us religious and moral? Shall we persuade ourselves and our children to build faith and all the duties of religion on the fear of endless misery? Shall we support the dishonourable idea, that religion and morality are not worthy our attention, unless endless misery threaten on the one hand, and immortality is promised on the other? Have those who have built their religion and morality on this foundation, been able to set us a better example than the patterns quoted by the Apostle

in our context ? If we examine the history of this system of religious terror, shall we not be presented with a persecuting priesthood and hierarchy, and a dissoluteness in morals, which would disgrace the darkest age of heathenism ?

What is the reason that a religion which promises its votaries immortality and eternal life for obedience, and threatens delinquents with the unspeakable woes of endless misery, after all produces so little vital religion or pure morality ? The reason of this is found in the very nature of man, and in the order of things. Give to men an irksome task to perform, threaten them with excruciating tortures in case of disobedience or failure, and their calculations will be to do as little of the hated work as possible, and avoid the penalty. Their constant study will be to find out inventions to clip and scant the work. Whoever calculates on human nature differently will be disappointed. But give to men an employment which reason and common sense will justify, and which is naturally productive of their advantage, and let them understand, that in the very nature of things, their faithfulness will procure them a reasonable and ample reward ; give them to understand the whole of their duty is planned in the wisest and best manner for their present happiness, and that no interest is to be served by their exertions exclusive of their own ; the selfishness natural to men will induce them to be faithful. Present to men a religion whose services are all calculated to promote their rational enjoyment, which takes nothing from them without returning more than its value, and whose increase of duty is an increase of happiness, and there is but little danger but they will eagerly accept it, and practice its precepts : this world is full of labour, toil and traffic, and the whole is carried on by the power of this principle. There is nothing that a man will not part with if he can obtain that in exchange which he values higher than that which he lets go. And

if we absurdly calculate on engaging men on any other principle, we shall have the mortification of looking for them where they are not. If from promises or threatenings, or both together, people are brought to engage in a religion whose services are irksome, they will most assuredly be neglected.

Let us then enquire what will make the duties of religion pleasureable. The Redeemer says, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." What makes it so? Not because we may indulge in all manner of sin; not because there are not arduous labours to be performed; not because great sacrifices and sufferings are not to be endured, but because the duties of the religion of Jesus can never be performed but from a principle of love; and love makes the labour and the burden easy and light.

What is here contended for may be seen in the government of a family of children. If the parent calculates on the principles of terror, and expects to have his children faithful and obedient for fear of an unmerciful punishment, it is true the children may be, for a season, filled with dread and horror, but all this can never induce them to attend with a cheerfulness and pleasure to the commandments enjoined. And even when under the most fearful apprehensions, they will be scrupulous about the extent of their duty. They will invent a thousand ways to hold up the appearance of faithfulness where they have studied to come short. The idea may be extended still further, and the disobedient children may be exercised with punishments of cruel severity, such as can be seen to have no mercy or compassion mingled with them, and all this shall serve to alienate their hearts from the parent, to fix a settled hatred in their minds against every requirement; and instead of softening, harden their hearts, in room of inclining them to filial duties, turn their faces and affections directly the other way.—But that kind of discipline,

whose pungent severity is in the manifestations of parental love, compassion and tenderness is the most sure of its object. This is "that wisdom which dwells with prudence, and finds out knowledge by witty inventions." It so contrives the administration of chastisement, as to convince the understanding of those who are exercised by it, that reformation is the object aimed at. It invents a thousand rewards as encouragements to obedience, and is always prompt in causing the meritorious to enjoy the fruits of their labours.

Duty itself is supreme delight when love is the inducement and the labour. By such a government the ignorant are enlightened, the hard hearted are softened, the disobedient reformed, and the faithful encouraged.

In viewing this general subject, and in applying it to the christian profession, duties and rewards, is it not most evident, that the penalty of eternal punishment on the one hand for our neglect, and the reward of immortality and eternal life for obedience on the other, may both of them be laid out of the question entirely? Is it not evident that we rate our christian virtues infinitely too high, when we presume to expect an immortal state of divine and glorious felicity as their reward? What proportion is there between the labour in this case and the reward expected? Surely there is none. Nor is there any more proportion between the demerits of unbelief and sin, and the endless punishment which has been held up as its just recompense. And as it is most unreasonable to expect the everlasting inheritance of eternal life for our good works, so it is equally unscriptural. "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his son." Why should we insist on labouring for that which God has been graciously pleased to give us in Christ? Was there ever a conclusion more unreasonable than to contend, that if our heavenly Father has, in his infinite mercy, given us eternal life in Jesus the Lord

from Heaven, and if we cannot merit this treasure, which is above all price, we will therefore turn our backs on all the commandments of our God, will blaspheme his holy name, will treat the orders of his house, his sanctuary and worship with contempt, will practice every abomination, and will teach our children to do the same! This is not "laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, it is not running the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

How can we be the disciples of Jesus, unless we are furnished with his spirit of wisdom and love? Can we walk in his steps, do the will of our father in Heaven, patiently suffer for righteousness sake, love our enemies, and pray for them, from a different principle from that which actuated him? If he was not induced by a principle of terror, is it not erroneous to depend on such a principle? In room of facilitating the christian race, does not this principle retard it? If the principle of fear were a sufficient incentive to move us in the duties of the christian profession, is it not plain that that love which "casteth out fear" would be of dangerous tendency? "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." "If ye love me," says the blessed Jesus, "keep my commandments."

To conclude: It seems a proper enquiry, in settling the mind on our general subject, whether there be, or be not, in the natural qualities of the christian profession and duties, a value, in relation to the happiness of its votary, sufficient to amount to a reasonable inducement to attend to all its requirements?

If, on careful and due examination it be found, that the duties required by the religion of Jesus, do not contain in themselves, such qualities as will afford a reasonable compensation to the faithful in

them, then it must be granted that propriety requires that some other compensation should be allowed. But should the case be so decided, it would involve another question, viz : who is so much more benefited by those duties as to render it just for him to make up this supposed want ? To be plain, if our heavenly father requires duties of us, which services are not of themselves sufficiently productive of our benefit to afford a reasonable compensation for our trouble, is he so much benefited by them as to render it just and proper that he should grant the addition required ? This can never be allowed. But surely somebody must be benefited enough by these christian duties to render it proper that they should be at the expense of them. Any thing that will not pay its own expenses, proves a want of wisdom in him who planned it.

If the scripture representation be allowed, this question is easily decided. "In keeping thy commandments there is *great reward*." "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments ; and his commandments are not grievous."

If righteousness here render it proper that we receive a compensation for it, that is not found in it, how are we to be recompensed for a life of righteousness in a future state ? It seems that these queries must satisfy the rational mind, that goodness is its own reward—that righteousness is to be valued for its own intrinsic worth. And if we are correct in this conclusion, it follows of necessary consequence, that unrighteousness is to be avoided for its own natural qualities, which are every way repugnant to our felicity. Could we all be fully persuaded that these things are so, it is reasonable to calculate that all would be pressing into this kingdom of righteousness, as it is to be supposed that men will part with what they dislike, for that which they love and highly prize.

All traffic is ventured on this principle. The purchaser never buys with a design to loose by

his bargain. The merchant ventures his thousands at a foreign market on the calculation that his wares are so much wanted where he sends them, that they will bring from thence what to him is of greater value. The vicious will part with their vice when they are persuaded that virtue is better. Go offer a wicked man a suit of the best of clothing, if he will part with his rags, he will take you at your word. Why? because he knows he is a gainer by it. Why will he not part with his sins for righteousness? Because he believes as he has been taught, that righteousness will not pay its way, and that in order to be happy here he must live a sinful life.

May it please God, my friends, to incline our hearts to his "commandment which is a lamp," and to his "law which is a light." And let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus as a perfect model for imitation.

Let us practice our sentiment in all our relations in life. As companions, as parents, as children, as neighbours, as citizens, and as belonging to the great family of man, made of one blood, and as children of our Father who is in Heaven, whose tender mercies are over all his works, to whom be glory for ever, through him who loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.

SERMON III.

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

DELIVERED AT THE SECOND UNIVERSALIST MEETING HOUSE IN
BOSTON.

ST. LUKE xvi. 19—31.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table : moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.—And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And, beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot : neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

THAT the letter of this passage is familiar to the mind of the hearer, no doubt is entertained ; but that the right sense and true meaning of the text are as generally understood, is very much to be doubted.

In treating on this subject, the following method will serve to direct our researches :

I. The current opinion and common use of this portion of our Saviour's words, will be laid before the hearer.

II. This current opinion and common use of the text will be disproved by the divine testimony.—

And,

III. The true sense of the text will be sought and illustrated, in as plain a manner as our ability and opportunity will permit.

On our first proposition little needs to be said, as the current opinion and common use of our text is familiar to the hearer.

The current opinion may be said to embrace the following particulars. 1st. That our Saviour, in this text, spake no parable, but gave a plain, literal account of the different situations and circumstances of a rich man and a beggar, first in this world, and secondly in a future state of existence. 2d. That the beggar literally died, and was carried by angels into a state of eternal blessedness, called in the text, Abraham's bosom. 3d. That the rich man also died a natural death, and went into a state of endless torment. In this situation he sees Abraham afar off in heaven, with Lazarus in his bosom, and makes his request for a drop of water, and is denied. 4th. That the gulf between Abraham and the rich man, is the distance which heaven and hell are from each other, which will eternally remain, and never be passed.

The common use which is made of this portion of scripture, is to support and confirm the opinion of endless punishment in a future state, for sins committed in this natural life, and particularly for the sins of luxurious living, and the neglect of the poor.

Believers in the doctrine of endless punishment resort to this passage as to a place of security, and as an impregnable bulwark. Here they maintain that God, who is good and kind to sinners in this world, will be utterly unmerciful to them in the world to come. That Jesus, the friend and redeemer of sinners, will have, in the next state of existence, no compassion. And saints, who in this world pray most sincerely for the conversion and salvation of sinners, will then feel no desires in their favour. As Abraham acknowledged the rich man in hell to be his son, yet would grant him

no favour, nor even express a desire so to do, it is maintained that parents hereafter in heaven, will see their own natural offspring in hell, without having it in their power to grant them the least favour, or of feeling the least desire thus to do.

In this description of the current opinion and common use of our text, simplicity has been duly regarded, and care taken to avoid giving a false colour to any part of the representation. Much more might be said, but it is believed that the general subject, as commonly understood, has been comprehended.

Secondly. In disproving the foregoing opinion and use of our text, arguments will be brought from the scriptures to show that they are contrary to the scheme of the gospel. It will likewise be shown that the connection in which our text is found, gives no support to the current opinion and common use of the passage. And finally, in the text itself, evidence will be found sufficient to refute the common application of these words.

1st. The gospel is the doctrine of repentance and salvation from sin. Mat. i, 21. "And thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." Acts v, 31. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Nothing is more evident, than that the scheme of the gospel designs the repentance and salvation of sinners. But the endless punishment of sinners is totally inconsistent with such a scheme.

The gospel teaches us that God is possessed of GREAT LOVE to sinners. Eph. ii, 4, 5. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ." 1st John iv, 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To represent the divine Being as inflicting an unmerciful punishment

on sinners, whom he loves with a GREAT LOVE, and for whom he sent his son to be the propitiation for their sins, is most surely, a very unscriptural and unreasonable representation.

The gospel assures us that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1st Tim. ii, 4.—If this be the will of God, it must be a mistake to suppose that our Saviour taught the doctrine of endless punishment. For it must be supposed that he knew the will of him who sent him, for the accomplishment of which will he came down from heaven. John vi, 38.

Our blessed redeemer teaches us to love mankind with the same manner of love with which sinners are loved of God. Mat. v, 44, 45. If this be the spirit of the gospel, which cannot be denied, the notion that saints in bliss will be spectators of the endless torments of their fellow creatures, and even of their own offspring, without feeling one friendly desire towards them, must be absurd in the extreme.

2d. That the connection in which our text is found, gives no support to the current opinion and common use of the passage, may be seen by a little attention.

Our text is found in connection with a number of beautifully instructive parables occupying the 15th and 16th chapters of St. Luke.

We are informed in the beginning of the 15th chapter as follows; "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." In reply to this, the Saviour spake the three parables which occupy the whole of the remaining part of the chapter. By the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son, in which was represented the recovery of all that was lost, and the joys of heaven in consequence of the repentance of sinners, he vindicated his conduct in receiving sinners and eating with them

The 16th chapter, in which our text is recorded, begins with the parable of the unjust steward, by which is represented the folly of the Pharisees and Scribes in not improving the law dispensation in a way to introduce them into the everlasting habitations of the gospel. Directly following this parable, Jesus speaks of the continuance of the law and the prophets until John, and of the kingdom of heaven which succeeded them. He says, verse 17. "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." The propriety of this he shows by the following parable, verse 18. "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery : and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." The next words are those of our text.

Now what is there in all, or in any part of the sayings of Jesus, which go before our text, that gives the least intimation of a subject like the one to which our text is usually applied ? Or what is there in all this connection, *properly* calculated to introduce such a sentiment as we are endeavouring to disprove ?

To suppose that he who spake as never man spake, abruptly dropped the subject of the end of the law dispensation, and the introduction of the gospel, or kingdom of heaven, and having no further allusion to this subject, proceeded to give an account of the sin of adultery, which account occupies but one verse, and then again flies directly from this subject, to give a literal account about a rich man and a beggar, in this world and in an eternal state, is so unwarrantable, and so derogatory to the character of the divine orator, that it is a matter of wonder that such an opinion should ever have been honoured with the consent of learned commentators.

3. Let us now look and see if there be not sufficient evidence in the text itself, to refute the common application of it.

Does not the account of the conversation which took place between the rich man and Abraham, naturally suggest the idea of a parable, and disprove the notion of a literal account? If, according to the common opinion, the rich man was in a state of torment, from which no hopes are ever entertained of an escape, why should he have asked of Abraham any assistance? And if infolded in those awful flames which are generally supposed to prey on the miserable hereafter, could the rich man believe that a drop of water on the tip of Lazarus's finger, could be of any use to him?

In Abraham's reply, two particulars are worthy of special notice. 1st. "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." In this part of the reply, the idea of equal favour is suggested. As in their former condition, the rich man was favoured more than the beggar, it seems no more than equal that there should be an exchange, and he who was first a beggar, should now be rich, and he who was first rich, should now be the beggar. But according to the common opinion, there is no equality of favours enjoyed by these two persons. There is no proportion between the momentary enjoyments of riches in this world, and the everlasting enjoyments of heaven. Nor is there any proportion between the momentary evils of poverty in this mortal life, and the supposed torments hereafter, which are never to end.

2d. "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." In this part of the reply, it is allowed that those who are in Abraham's bosom would go to the rich man, if they were not prevented by the gulf, which also prevents those who would pass from the rich man to Abraham. But if the common opinion of the text be allowed, can any thing be more unac-

countable than the desire of those who are in heaven, to go to this place of indescribable torture!

But why should they wish to go? To take up their abode there? Horrible! What then? To relieve some beloved parent, companion, child, brother, sister, or dear friend? The desire to have such relief granted, is not allowed in the common opinion. The candid hearer will see enough in this part of Abraham's reply, to render the general sentiment which we are endeavouring to disprove, very doubtful at least.

Furthermore, why should those in hell wish to pass this gulf, and go to heaven? Have they any desire to see God in his holy dwelling place? Have they hearts to wish to be with Jesus, the brightness of eternal existence? or do they desire the company of the justified? The opinion which we disprove, allows none of these. That wretches in torment should wish to be eased of pain, is reasonable enough; but why an impassable gulf should be necessary to keep those who hate God, who are enemies to Christ, and to all the holy, and to holiness itself, from going into this society, is what we cannot account for.

Though it be generally thought, that in defence of the doctrine of endless punishment, this passage of scripture is as a strong city, and this gulf as a commanding fortress, it is confidently believed, that whoever will carefully examine what is said of this gulf, will be fully convinced that its common application is altogether unfounded.

More might be said, if more were required, to show from the text under consideration, that its common use is a manifest perversion. But relying on the candor of the hearer, and believing that the arguments already educed, are sufficient for the purpose for which they are designed, we may proceed, as was proposed.

Thirdly. To seek for the true meaning of our text, which we shall now call a parable.

In order to proceed in a proper manner, it is ne-

cessary to take into view the whole of the 15th and 16th chapters. It is also necessary that we enter on this investigation, with an impression of mind, that Jesus Christ was capable of delivering a discourse, the several parts of which would harmonize, and one part assist in giving the right sense of another.

After the divine teacher had in the two first parables in the 15th chapter, vindicated the doctrine of his grace, and defended the propriety of his receiving sinners and eating with them, he varied the third parable, so as to introduce one more character than was represented in the two former.

This character was the elder brother, who was angry at the return of the prodigal, and the kind reception with which he was welcomed of his father. By this elder brother, the religious Jews, who were angry at the kind treatment which sinners received from Christ, were represented. And their rejecting the gospel, was signified by the elder brother's refusing to go into the house, and join in the feast and joy of the happy occasion.

In the parable of the unjust steward, which begins the 16th chapter, the same religious Jews are represented by a steward who is accused of unfaithfulness, for which he is to be turned out of his office. As the steward was commended for making provision for the future, by a wise use of his present opportunity, these religious Jews were admonished to make such use of their privileges as would introduce them into the christian faith and church. See the application of the parable. "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Jesus then proceeds to remark, that if they were not faithful in that which was least, they would not be in much ; and if they were not faithful in the religion of the law, that of the gospel, which was the true riches, would not be given them, though these true riches were not their own.

The Pharisees were provoked at these rebukes and admonitions, and they derided him who reproved them. He then dealt plainly with his religious enemies, and said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men ; but God knoweth your hearts : for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God." Continuing his subject, Jesus adds, " The law and the prophets were until John : since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." Here we come to the parable concerning adultery, by which is shown that the law must be fulfilled, and not put away, as a man puts away his wife unlawfully, and marries to another. On the other hand, it is signified, that as Jesus is the end of the law for righteousness, and had come to close the first dispensation, and to introduce the gospel, the Jews in rejecting the gospel, and living in the law covenant, committed adultery, as would a man who should marry a woman who had been put away from her husband.

The next words are, " There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen," &c. Here a parable is introduced, by which is represented the adultery which the religious Jews committed in remaining in the law covenant, and refusing to enter into the gospel church.

By the rich man the high priest might be particularly intended, as a representative of the Jews in general. In the 28th of Exodus we have an account of this garment of purple and fine linen, which Moses was commanded to prepare for Aaron, the first high priest.

By the beggar, the Gentile is represented as excluded from the privileges which God's covenant people enjoyed. The death of Lazarus consisted in his being absolved from all his idolatrous religion ; and by his being carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, is represented the conversion of the

Gentiles to Abraham's faith, by the preaching of the Apostles. The rich man died a political death. His dispensation ceases. He now sees fulfilled the words of Christ, Luke xiii, 28, 29. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." And here let us add, the next verse for our instruction. "And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

In this wretched situation, this representative of the house of Israel sees Abraham afar off, with the Gentile in his favour, and makes his request for mercy. But though Abraham calls him son, he reminds him of his former situation, in which he was favoured with the divine oracles, while the Gentiles could get nothing but a few crumbs which their travelling philosophers picked up for them, of the religion of the patriarchs, and of the law. These philosophers are represented by dogs who licked the sores of the beggar—Endeavouring to mollify and heal the vices of heathenism, with the moral maxims which they communicated from their tongues. "Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." You Jews have had a divine revelation, have been blessed of God for a long time, while the poor Gentiles had no hope, and were without God in the world; but now the divine wisdom has seen fit to visit the Gentiles with the gospel, while you are excluded. And lest the Gentile believers should have access with the waters of the gospel to you, or you should come into the christian faith, "there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

In the next place, this representative of the Jews requests that Lazarus may be sent to his five

brethren who were in his father's house, that he might testify unto them, that they might not come into this unhappy situation. But Abraham replies, "they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;" and assures them that if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one went unto them from the dead. These five brethren were that part of the house of Israel which was represented by five foolish virgins in the 25th of Matthew, who not having the oil of divine knowledge with the rites of the law, were left in darkness, when the glorious bridegroom entered, with his Gentile bride, into the gospel covenant and dispensation.

On the subject of this gulf, it may be proper to be somewhat particular. The use of it we have already seen; which is to prevent those who would go from Abraham's bosom to the rich man; and those who would go from the place of the rich man to Abraham's bosom. By these things we are instructed that the Gentile Christian would go to the unbelieving Jews with the gospel, if it were possible, and that the unbelieving Jews have at all times been desirous of entering into favour with Abraham their father. But why should such a gulf be fixed? And what are the purposes of divine wisdom in this thing? These queries are solved in the 11th chapter to the Romans, where St. Paul has treated the subject in a most luminous manner.—He first argues the necessity of the Jews' unbelief, for the purpose of granting favour to the Gentiles. And on the other hand, he argues that through the mercy which the Gentiles obtain through the fall of the Jews, the Jews shall at last obtain mercy.—See verses 30, 31, 32. "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

Will any inquire, how the Gentiles obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jew? Then let them consider, that if Jews had not apostatized from the true religion, but had believed in the Saviour when he came, they never would have fulfilled the prophecies concerning him, by rejecting him, condemning him, and by putting him to death. And if these prophecies concerning the treatment which Christ should receive from his countrymen, had not been fulfilled, the Gentiles could never have been converted to the gospel. But when the Gentiles heard the gospel preached by the apostles, witnessed by the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Jesus, the door of faith was properly opened to them; and they saw the light which God gave for "salvation unto the ends of the earth."

That the wisdom of God, which is without partiality, might appear to have the whole direction of these vast affairs, those blinded Jews, through whose fall this great salvation came to the Gentiles, are to obtain mercy at last by the means of the Gentile church. Here we see the sense of our Saviour's words before noticed: "And behold there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last." The apostle in the 11th of Romans, seems desirous that his Gentile brethren should understand this mystery, and says, verses 25, 26, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

In this view of our subject, the pertinence of the words of Abraham appears, in which he suggested to the rich man, that equal favours were distributed between him and Lazarus. And indeed we see no reason why equal favours should not be granted to the two; for there is not a word in the whole parable, that intimates that one was more

meritorious than the other. We are not informed that the rich man went to hell because he was rich, or that the beggar went into Abraham's bosom because he was poor, and covered with sores.

How beautiful, how glorious, how surpassing wonder, are the ways of divine wisdom. With God there is no respect of persons. He is equally good to all. That gulf which divides between the believing Gentile, and the unbelieving Jew, is designed for the ultimate good of both, and wisely constructed to aid the cause of God's universal grace and love towards mankind. For this cause, the Redeemer of the world said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

The wisdom of heaven, unlike the wisdom of this world, never works against its own scheme of "reconciliating" both Jews and Gentiles, "unto God in one body by the cross; having slain the enmity thereby." Eph. ii. 16. And therefore it would not have seemed good to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to hide the things of the kingdom of the gospel from the Jews, if it were not necessary for the eventual accomplishment of their final reconciliation. But the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God, labours to prove, that those Jews who stumble at the stumbling stone laid in Sion, are cast off, to be received to favour no more. But St. Paul in the 11th of Romans, to which reference has been made, argues in a very different manner, as in verses 11, 12. "I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

Such was the glory and beauty of this subject, in the view of this apostle, that when he comes to

close the subject, which he seems to wind up in the 32d ver. in the following words, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all," he seems to break out into an ecstasy, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

You have, kind hearers, most attentively listened to what has been offered on the subject under consideration; you have heard what is generally supposed to be the meaning of our text; you have heard arguments designed to disprove the common use of the passage, in which arguments it has been shown that the common sentiment which this passage is generally used to support, is repugnant to the scheme of the gospel. It has likewise been shown, that the connection in which this portion of scripture is found, gives no support to the common opinion; and you have heard arguments deduced from the text itself, sufficient to refute the sentiment generally supported by it. And lastly, you have heard what your humble servant believes, beyond all reasonable doubt, to be the true sense and meaning of these words of our Redeemer, accompanied with such evidence from the context and other parts of the divine testimony, as seems to apply to the subject. Your duty remains. You will after all preserve an independence of mind sufficient to judge for yourselves.

As you will not rest your faith on my testimony, so you ought not to rest it on the force of mere tradition. You ought to find something very direct and positive in proof of the general opinion, before you adopt it. For the doctrine of endless punishment has never yet been explained in a way to justify our Creator in the infliction of such punishment; and until it is, we should avoid charging him with that which is derogatory to his beneficent character.

SERMON IV.

FALSE TEACHERS COMPARED TO FOXES.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE THIRD SABBATH IN NOV. 1819.

EZEKIEL XIII. 4.

“O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the desert.

THE true prophets of God were few in Israel, while the false prophets were numerous; and there seems to have been no small contest between them. As would naturally be expected, the many false prophets endeavoured to study the disposition of a perverse and wicked people, and accommodate their testimony in a way to suit their prejudices, and improve their ignorance and superstition in the best manner, for their own emolument and popularity; while on the other hand, the few prophets of God were under the necessity of bearing testimony against the many, contrary to the corrupt traditions and dispositions of the people, whereby they rendered themselves unpopular and despised.

The false prophets of Israel were to the people in their day, what false teachers are now to the Christian commonwealth. St. Peter has accommodated us with a comparison which justifies this remark. He says—“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their perni-

cious ways ; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

By this comparison, the Apostle signified the art and cunning which characterise the false teachers in the Christian dispensation, as well as the false prophets under the former. He says, "they shall *privily* bring in damnable heresies." That is, they will do this with great art and calculation. This naturally brings the figure used in our text, to mind : "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the desert." The fox is noted for his cunning ; and with this quality he combines cruelty, being an animal which lives on prey.

The first effort of false prophets and of false teachers, is to make the people, who are to be the subjects of their erroneous ministry, believe that they are sent of God. Until this point is gained, the false teacher can entertain no favourable hopes of success ; but he well knows that the moment he can make the people believe that God has sent him, he has little or nothing to fear, and that his advancement is secured. With those views, the false prophets and teachers came to the people, with a most solemn account of being sent of God ; they speak in God's name, and say, "Hear ye the word of the Lord, thus saith the Lord."

It may be well for us to notice what Ezekiel says of the prophets in the chapter where our text is recorded. "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, hear ye the word of the Lord ; thus saith the Lord God, woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, the Lord saith ; and the Lord hath not sent them ; and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, the Lord saith it : albeit I have not spoken ?"

By this representation, we learn that the false prophets followed their own spirit, and not the spirit of God ; they saw visions of lies, and not of truth ; they pretended to come to the people in the name of the Lord, when he had not sent them, and when his word was not in their mouth. In all this, the artful cunning of the fox is evidently seen. If these prophets had told the people that God had not sent them, but that they would prophesy as well as they could, out of their own heart, the people would have paid but little attention to them, and perhaps none to their testimony. Therefore, in order to gain the confidence of the people, it was necessary to make them believe that they came in the name of the Lord, with his word and spirit.

Now this is the method by which false teachers introduce themselves into their ministry, and impose themselves on the Christian church as the ministers of Christ. Their first attempt is to make the people believe that God has sent them. To this end they bear testimony of themselves, and say that they are sent of God. It is remarkable how such means succeed with the people. The false teacher tells his own story ; he informs the people that he is solely devoted to their good, that his own interest is entirely out of the question, that he would not have come to them if the command of the Lord were not on him so to do. Should a man of business be told by a stranger, that he had come a great distance to trade with him, but had not the least desire to gain any thing to himself by the traffic, that his only motive was to advance his interest, and to make him rich and opulent, there is not one in a thousand, perhaps, who would be deceived in this way. Every discerning man, with a slight acquaintance with human nature, would at once be put on his guard by this manner of communication. But false teachers of religion spend a long time to learn the art of making the people believe that God has sent

them ; and if we may indulge in the figure of speech used in our text, the young foxes have old ones to train them to their arts. These false teachers, like the old Jewish pharisees, will so disfigure their faces, put on such a solemn visage, speak in such a lamenting, mournful tone of voice, use a set of solemn words, stand and speak in such a peculiar attitude, that the ear of the hearer is strangely devoted to sounds, and his eyes set wide open at something which appears more like an imaginary spectre, than like a fellow mortal. In all this awful solemnity the people are told that they are every moment exposed to fall into hell, and under the burning wrath of an highly offended God ; that their children are naturally heirs of endless vengeance, and that there is but one way for any escape, which is to adhere strictly to their testimony, and receive it as the word of God. A fearful trembling now seizes weak and delicate nerves, and the power of sympathy conveys the action to the more strong and stable, and the conclusion becomes general, that the man is sent of God, and that to reject his doctrine will expose the people to all the threatenings which are so positively denounced.

This method of deceiving the people was not introduced of a sudden ; it was brought on by degrees, and established by custom and tradition ; so that now the business goes on as regularly as other employments in society. The old foxes know exactly when the young are fitted for their labours, and the people are already prepared, wasting and longing for the deception.

As has been remarked, the fox unites in his nature both cunning and cruelty. For this reason, Jesus called Herod a fox. He was told to depart, because Herod would kill him. To this he replied, "Go tell that fox, behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." This cunning and cruelty are plainly discernible in the false teachers of re-

ligion. They are cunning to deceive, and cruel to torment the deceived. In the chapter where our text is recorded, the Lord accuses the false prophets of crying peace ; " and there was no peace." So false teachers now inform the people, that if they will receive their doctrine they will have peace ; but the fact is, there is no peace in believing their testimony ; for they prophesy out of their own corrupt and partial hearts, and the doctrine they preach is like the hearts which invent it, full of craft and cruelty. It affects a great deal of compassion and love for the people who are exposed to the eternal unmerciful vengeance of God, and the people think that these teachers must be remarkably kind to use such constant endeavours to deliver them from the hands of such an enemy as God is ! Being deceived, they cannot reason. If they could reflect, and calmly reason on the subject, they would see at once, that if these teachers were in reality so much better than God, as their preaching represents, God would not have sent them. If God were an enemy to his creatures, in the room of sending such loving creatures as these foxes pretend to be, he would send his messengers of vengeance, and cut them off at once. When the deceit has succeeded, and the people believe in the false doctrines which are inculcated, have they any peace ? Have they any rest ? Do they enjoy quietude ? No, they have no peace, no rest day nor night. What is the matter ? The fact is, the creed in which they are taught to believe, is full of cruelty, and teaches them that they are every moment in danger of worse consequences than can be represented by any similitude in nature.

We are informed that the fox will cunningly feign himself to be dead, will stretch himself out in a lifeless posture, by which deceit he induces the fowls to alight on, or near him, when, in a sudden and nimble manner, he snatches and devours them. So false teachers cunningly feign them-

selves to be dead to the world, to have no desire for earthly riches, honour or power, by which deceit they drag the people into their very jaws, and between their sharp cutting teeth. Of all classes of the community, none have a greater thirst for riches, honour and power, than these false teachers. They are continually laying plans and contriving schemes to get power into their hands, and at the same time pretend to be dead to the world. This is acting the fox faithfully.

In delineating, illustrating and defending their creeds, false teachers resemble the cunning of the fox of the wilderness in several respects.

Where this artful animal burrows in the ground, he takes care to have several outlets, so that if he be attacked at one of them, while his adversary is looking out for him at that place, he makes his escape at another, and is gone long before his adversary knows it. Thus do false teachers; they endeavour to hide themselves in as great obscurity as possible, but if inquiry and argument pursue and find them out, they have taken care that they have more ways than one for an escape. If they are attacked on the principle of the works of the creature, as matter of justification to eternal life, and if the argument is like to bring them out to the light, they make their escape through the well-studied avenue of partial sovereign grace and particular election. If, on the other hand, they are questioned in a skilful manner on the doctrine of partial election, and what they call sovereign grace, and if they find no way to defend this scheme, all at once they tack short about and are pleading, in a most tender and affectionate manner for the free offers of salvation to all, and laying it down in the most solemn manner, that all are invited to come in welcome to the gospel feast. Thus the fox is gone.

The art practised by the fox to elude his pursuer in the chase, is a very fit emblem of the cunning craftiness of false teachers, "whereby they lie in

wait to deceive." Like the serpent, the fox never runs on a straight line. He makes frequent crooks, running this way and that way, and appears to one little acquainted with his cunning to get along but slowly, and to care but little whether he makes his escape or not. But all these crooks are designed to puzzle his pursuer and embarrass his speed. This method is employed until one more perplexing is found to be necessary; when the fox sets himself to crossing his own track, running round and round, forming the most difficult labyrinth, from which he makes a sudden leap as far as possible, leaving his pursuer to seek him in the labyrinth which he has left, while he makes the best of his way to another difficult place. In like manner do false teachers commence their discourses, by taking care to avoid a straight line of simple truth; they run a little way, pretending that the Divine Being is all love and grace to mankind, is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, that the most entire confidence may be safely placed in his wisdom, power and goodness; but immediately they take a turn, and represent him as capable of having his mind so changed as to burn with implacable vengeance toward those who do not conform to their doctrine. If they are followed closely, and questioned concerning the consistency of their story, they will begin to cross their paths, contradict what they have said, run into the doctrine of predestination, from that to free will, from free will to predestination, and from thence back again: In one breath they will hold to election and reprobation, in the next call on all to repent and be saved, and when called on to explain these contradictions, they take a leap into mysticism, call it all a holy mystery, which carnal reason cannot understand, and thus, like the fox, make their escape.

This kind of preaching has been practised by false teachers, until many of the sensible people in Christendom have been driven to give up all belief in divine revelation, and to seek for rest in

moral philosophy, without the assistance of revealed religion.

Perhaps no foxes ever represented false teachers more to perfection, than the three hundred which Sampson caught, fastened together, two and two, with fire-brands between each pair, and sent among the standing corn of the Philistines.

This was an effectual method of destroying those extensive fields of wheat on which the Philistines depended for bread. If these foxes could have agreed to run a straight course, they would have done much less damage to the fields of corn ; but agreeably to their nature, they ran crooked, and while one would attempt to go one way, his companion would take a leap the other ; in this way, they went in every possible direction, while the fire-brands served to increase their efforts and to burn the corn. In this manner false teachers are covenanted together, but with no disposition which harmonizes their hearts ; and while one runs in one crooked path, another attempts to draw him in a different way, quite as crooked ; whilst all the time they are rendered even furious with a sort of "strange fire," which characterizes their doctrines, and produces a zeal not according to knowledge.—This fire is scattered every where, and in every place into which these false teachers run ; while that reason, understanding and knowledge, which to moral beings is mortal bread, is all prostrated and consumed, by these false teachers and the fire they carry with them, as was the corn of the Philistines by the foxes and the fire-brands.

As has been already noticed, St. Peter has presented us with a comparison of the false prophets among the people of the Jews, and the false teachers that should arise in the Christian church ; and it may be profitable for us to notice a few particulars which may serve to mark the distinction between true and false prophets and teachers. In the days of the prophets of Israel, the false prophets were vastly more numerous than the true proph-

ets of God. At one time the prophet Elijah stood alone, while the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty; but whether the disproportion is as great now, or not, we may not pretend to say; though if we may know them by their fruits, as our Saviour directs, it would not be very difficult to compute their numbers.

One infallible mark of a false prophet or teacher, is, he has a disposition to persecute.—Thus did the false prophets persecute the prophets of the Lord; and thus do the many false teachers in Christendom persecute, as far as they can, the few who dare to testify the truth as it is in Jesus, and disprove their doctrines of error.

The distinguishing trait which St. Peter has given of false teachers is, that they should bring in damnable heresies; and he tells us what these heresies amount to, “Even denying the Lord that bought them; and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”

All false doctrines, in one way or other, deny the Lord that bought us. They will either deny that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all men, or what amounts to the same thing, they will deny the final efficacy of this purchase. And when the false teacher treats on the great subject of the Saviour, he has ready at command studied methods of professing to believe in him, and of holding him up for others to believe and trust in, while at the same time he runs his whole doctrine in such a crooked, doubtful course, that about all he says he finally contradicts. False teachers who deny the Lord that bought us, do this work in an artful, cunning manner, they know it will not answer to profess to deny him in full, because this would be no deception; people would pay no attention to their testimony. But they pretend to believe in him, and to be his faithful ministers. They pretend to understand the deep mysteries of his doctrine, which are so very intricate that none but themselves, who have in a special manner been

let into the secrets of God, can understand. It belongs to this crafty scheme of error, to make the people believe that they must depend on what the teacher says, take his testimony on his bare word, and to think it a crime to attempt to reduce it to rational principles.

Reason is one of the greatest enemies with which false teachers have to contend ; they therefore endeavour to persuade the people to view reason as carnal, and inimical to religion, and by all means to lay it out of the case entirely. All this is necessary in order to prepare the mind to believe the strange and unreasonable notions which they have to impose on the simple.

These intimations, my friends, are what you know to be facts ; you have heard false teachers speak of the revealed will of God, and of his secret will ; you have heard them compare his revealed will with his decreetive will, and undertake to tell the difference. You have heard them speak against our reason, and endeavour to point out its dangerous tendency ; you have heard much said about hidden mysteries, into which we have no right to enquire ; yet these very mysteries are the subjects on which these false teachers continually dwell, and in which they require the implicit faith of the people.

Prepared in this way, and armed in all this guise, the fox takes his course, and practices his work of heresy, even denying the Lord that bought us. If one who dares to exercise his reason, and has boldness enough to question this false teacher, ask him how we should understand St. Paul, where he says that God " will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ? " he cunningly looks forward to see what the subject is leading to ; he sees that its natural tendency is the salvation of all men. What now must he do ? To allow this would not deny the Lord that bought us ; he immediately replies—It is God's revealed will that all men should be saved, but not his se-

cret, decreetive will. If he be asked why God should reveal a will which is contrary to his decrees, he replies, that God is a Sovereign, and has a right to do as he pleases, and that we have no right to inquire into his secrets. If the conversation be continued, and the passage be brought up again, this false teacher will tack like a fox, and say, the word ALL does not mean ALL *without exception*; and then he will run with triumph for some time, contending that there are passages in scripture, where the word *all* is used in a limited sense. Thus, like a fox, he crosses his own track.

If this false teacher is under the necessity of explaining St. Paul's testimony, that the one Mediator gave himself a ransom for all men, at one time he will say, that St. Paul meant all the elect, not all the impenitent. But if the argument press him hardly, he will be sure to shift his ground, and say, that Jesus did give himself a ransom for all, conditionally; that is, if they will repent and believe. Thus he contradicts himself on every subject.

St. Peter says, that these false teachers "bring upon themselves swift destruction." And this, my friends, is verily the case; for if we deny the Lord that bought us, this very denial is our present and swift destruction. Our own confidence is destroyed, our hope demolished, our peace given to the winds, and our fears and horrors awakened.

Let us then turn away our ears from hearing those doctrines, which deny the Lord that bought us, and let us learn of Him, who is wisdom to the foolish, righteousness to sinners, sanctification to the unclean, redemption to the captive, and life to the dead.

SERMON V.

MEN REWARDED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS IN THE PRESENT LIFE.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE FIRST SABBATH IN DEC. 1812.

1 PETER III. 10, 11.

"For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it."

THE first subject to which the attention of the hearer is invited, in order to obtain a profitable understanding of the passage read for consideration, is the principle, on which the argument of the text is founded. This principle is a certain fixed law in our nature, by which we are always induced to act for our own gratification, benefit or enjoyment; and by which we are always restrained from whatever is, in our apprehension, either incapable of promoting the objects of our desires, or of a tendency to prevent them.

This fixed law of our nature is that which renders us proper subjects of advice, caution, exhortation, command, threatening, rebuke, censure and punishment; it is this that justly accounts for all the conditional, or unconditional promises, which are wisely made by the divine Being, or by man himself to a fellow being, or to his offspring. Take away this governing law from the reasonable creature where it is placed by the Creator, and the very idea of influencing man to action is annihilated; for should you on the one hand threaten him

with the greatest possible severities even for the most inconsiderable action, as he has no regard to himself, the threatening would prove utterly abortive. So likewise on the other hand, should you promise him an immense reward for a momentary labour, as he values not his own enjoyment, the promise, in this case, would necessarily prove as ineffectual as the threatening in the former.

Should an objector say, that man frequently acts to his own injury, and as often neglects what is most for his profit, the reply informs him that the objection does no reach the principle against which it is intended ; for the patient acts from the same law in receiving medicine which proves injurious, as in the use of that which is attended with the most salutary effects ; and this is equally applicable to every other instance of self-injurious action. But should we indulge the objector, and allow that man is capable of a design against himself, this would most surely render entirely null every possible promise and threatening, which could be set before him. But it is altogether impossible that any one should desire to lessen his own enjoyments, or augment his infelicity. Man is capable of acting for the promotion of that alone which is to his mind desirable.

My friends, the principle here argued lies at the foundation of all the actions of man. You may trace all parts of the immense fabric of human exertions, of human labour, of all the acquirements in arts and sciences to this principle. You may begin with a newly-born infant, its first exertions indicate a creature of want and desire, and as such you may trace him through all the various windings of the path of future life, whether he be virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable, on his journey.

This principle is most evidently that on which the argument of our text is founded. The Apostle does not say ; For he that will hate life and see evil days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile ; let him eschew

evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it; but he says exactly the reverse of this; "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it." The inspired author of our text knew human nature too well to expect man would act without a motive, or that he could be persuaded to act to his own disadvantage, unless he were deceived. The plain sense of the text points out the only means whereby a man can obtain what he most desires, and indeed all he desires. Every one wishes for happiness in life, and to see good days. This is what is constitutional with every individual of the human family. Will you not all bear me witness to this truth? Is there an individual, male or female, young or old, in this assembly, who has any desire to live a miserable, wretched life? Is there one whose heart does not most fervently desire to see good days? You all assent most cordially to this. You are therefore, all the very persons addressed in our text, in which the only method, by which this desire of your heart can possibly be obtained, is most clearly laid down, and placed within the reach of the most limited capacity.

According to our text, it is an important fact; stated by the authority of heaven, that whoever will refrain their tongues from evil, and their lips that they speak no guile; whoever will shun evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it, shall see good days and enjoy life; and according to this same passage, it is an equally momentous fact, declared by the same authority, that whoever disregards these means, and does not refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; who does not shun to do evil, and neglects to do good, who neither seeks peace nor follows after it, must see evil days, and live a wretched, miserable life. This is the plain, uncontrovertible doctrine of our text, and according to this doctrine

we shall humbly attempt to improve it to the religious and moral advantage of this listening, and devotional audience.

In these labours the speaker will enjoy a peculiar satisfaction arising from a full conviction of the goodness of our heavenly Father towards his rational offspring, and the impartiality of that goodness, which are the essential attributes of the doctrine to which his labours are usually devoted. This felicity, however, will be mingled with an anxiety corresponding with a sense of his inability to do justice to a subject, which involves such an extensive interest as our religious and moral happiness in life. But there is one consideration calculated to give support in this undertaking, which is the devout attention with which you will assist the speaker, while he endeavours to bring before you the invaluable treasures which our heavenly Father has given us in the undeviating laws of moral virtue.

Having thus endeavoured to call your attention to the principle on which the doctrine of our text is founded, and having presented you with a general view of this doctrine, your public servant will solicit your attention to the contemplation of the doctrine which has been stated, as it stands opposed to what has for a long time been acknowledged as orthodox by our christian clergy, and churches. The sentiment to which we here allude contends that virtue is not rewarded, nor wickedness punished in this life, where they are acted, but that the reward of the former and the punishment of the latter are reserved to a future state, where ample justice will be rendered to all, according to their works in this world. The numerous advocates of this opinion contend that there would appear a manifest injustice in the divine economy, if there were not a state of retribution in a future existence, where the divine administration shall make as much difference in the distribution of happiness and misery as there is in the moral characters of

men in this world, as such a difference is not regarded by the divine government here. Many are so sanguine on this subject, as to contend, that a contrary belief has a most direct tendency to evil, as thereby all the evil consequences of vice and immorality are denied, and the most flattering encouragements held out to the vicious. It seems reasonable to allow, that if the sins which are committed in this state are to be punished in a future world, they are not punished here ; and also, that if good works in this world are to be recompensed in the next, they have not their reward here ; for if you pay a man for his labours in the town where they are performed, you would not expect to meet his demand in another place. And if a man be punished for a crime in the state where he commits it, he cannot, in justice, receive this punishment in an adjacent state.

It appears clear, that nothing could be stated more directly repugnant to the doctrine of our text than the orthodox opinion which we have now noticed. It reverses the subject entirely, and promises a happy life and good days to him, who refrains not his tongue from evil, nor his lips from speaking guile ; who refuses not to do evil, but shuns the way of peace. Were it not for the blind insatiation and unaccountable stupidity, which thousands manifest on this subject, it would seem a waste of time to attempt to show, by any process of argument, the egregious error of this doctrine, which so directly opposes not only the passage now under consideration, the uniform testimony of scripture, but also every matter of fact in the whole world, and in the experience of every individual, in all ages, which has the least bearing on our subject. But such is the power of tradition, that the utmost patience is required to remove the scales from her eyes, to untie the knots by which she has fastened the minds of her votaries, and to remove the mighty mass of rubbish which composes her sanctuary, and to gather her hay, wood, and

stubble for the fire to which they are appointed.

Let us examine this subject a few moments; and endeavour to bring it into the light of reason and experience. If then a vicious life be productive of happiness and good days to the immoral, it follows of course, that vice and immorality are favourable to public peace, happiness and tranquillity; for nothing is more evident, than that individual and public felicity grow from the same causes. But are any so strangely bewildered as to suppose that the miseries and wretchedness of society are owing to its virtues, and that its happiness is derived from its vices? No, surely, there is but one opinion on this question, when it is considered as a whole; and yet the very individuals, who acknowledge that it is the wickedness of the people, which renders them miserable, and brings down the judgments of God upon them, still contend that it is not in this world that sin is punished, but the next state of man's existence.

Again; It belongs to this inquiry to ask, what can be so much worse in the state of man's existence hereafter, than what his vices bring upon him here, that this should be considered no punishment, but that a just retribution? It must be something worse than sin itself, for if sin were worse and more tormenting than the retribution which is supposed to be reserved for the future world, then the sinner will find relief by receiving this retribution! But it is contended, that the wicked will continue to sin in the next state. Then why not find as much happiness there as here? If sin in this world be productive of happiness, why will it change its nature so much as to produce misery in the next? And, on the other hand, it belongs to this subject to ask, what the righteous have to expect in the other world, which is so much better than righteousness as to amount to a recompense for that, which gives them so much unhappiness here? And why should we suppose that righteousness should produce misery in this world, but change its nature

in the next, and produce happiness ? It furthermore belongs to this subject to inquire why our heavenly Father should, by an established law, constitute that sin, which is for our happiness in this world, and that righteousness, which is inimical to our felicity here ? These queries serve to show the absurdity of this orthodox superstition, and to open our eyes to see that sin and misery are inseparably conjoined on the one hand as righteousness and happiness are on the other.

If we pay the least regard to the testimony of the scriptures, we shall find that this denial of the punishment of sin, and the reward of righteousness in this state of existence, is in direct opposition to it. In all the writings of the great law-giver of Israel, there is not the most distant hint of any punishment for sin, or reward for well-doing beyond the present state ; but very particular and severe laws laid down for the punishment of crimes in this life. See Lev. xxiv. 13, &c. " And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him ; as well the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death. And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. And he that killeth a beast shall make it good ; beast for beast. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour ; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him ; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth ; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again. And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it ; and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for one

of your own country ; for I am the Lord your God."

On the other hand, see the promises for well doing. See Lev. xxvi. 3, &c. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them ; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time ; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid ; and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.—For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.—And I will walk among you, and be your God, and ye shall be my people." Again the scene changes in this chapter, and the curses for disobedience are minutely recorded.

Now if we allow that these laws were of divine authority, which all our christian clergy do, what colour of reason is there in pretending that the judge of all the earth does not punish sin in this world. The whole history, contained in the scriptures, of the Jewish nation, seems to be an account of the blessings which God bestowed on that people in approbation of their obedience to his commands, and of the dreadful sufferings which they endured, as a recompense of their disobedience. But, we repeat it, there is not in all the writings of Moses and the prophets a single intimation of any reward for virtue or obedience which was yielded in this life, in a future state ; nor is there any intimation of the punishing of the crimes committed here, in another world.

Will it be said that the gospel dispensation has

reversed this divine order, and put a stop to the punishment of sin, and the reward of righteousness in this life, and has reserved all this for a future state? But why should people in ancient times be punished for their sins in this world, where they committed it, and we be punished in the future, where we have committed no crime? Furthermore, our blessed Saviour renounces all right to make such a change; he says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." And it is worthy of our careful notice, that Jesus pronounced no other punishments on his enemies, the Jews, than was written in the law and the prophets.

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans has set the sense of the scriptures in a clear light, on our subject. See chap. 13, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power—resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." This testimony, my friends, is the true sense of the whole scriptures on the subject, and is in direct opposition to the superstition which contends that sin is not punished in this world. It is really unaccountable, why our christian clergy should allow the truth of St. Paul's declaration here cited, and yet contend that God does not punish sin in this life!

If we allow that our penal laws are consistent with the mind and will of God, and are his ordinances, then we acknowledge that when crimes are punished according to our laws, this punish-

ment is the righteous judgment of God on the transgressor. But if we do not allow these laws to be the ordinances of God, then let us abrogate them at once; for what right have we to make laws to punish crimes in a state, in which God chooses not to punish them? To be consistent with this blind superstition which we are considering, there should be no law against crimes, or at least no penalties on the face of the earth! The thief, the adulterer, the murderer should have their liberty to go on and multiply crimes without any punishment until they come into that world where it is consistent with God's law to have them punished! But the superstition under consideration contends that all this wickedness may be repented of one minute before the sinner goes out of the world, in which case he is to receive no punishment in the future world; so after all this system of terror amounts to no terror at all, for there are provisions in it, by which a man may live in sin to old age, and never be punished for the same neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Taking our leave of their vain traditions, let us duly attend to the means which are laid down in our text, whereby we may be blest with the enjoyments of life, and see good days. And,

1. Let us consider the tongue and the lips. These members, which are so vastly useful to mankind, are of a character which requires them to be kept under a constant restraint, lest with our tongues we speak evil and indulge our lips in uttering guile. You will easily perceive that a restraint on these members is equally such on the heart, for this restraint must be the moral dictate of the mind, so that the restraint is first on the inclinations, and the judgment acts in its own official character, enlightened by reason. If this restraint be not in the heart, the tongue and lips, being the organs of the mind, will be subservient to evil thoughts and desires; but if an enlightened principle rule and restrain the desires of the mind, it also controls the

tongue and the lips, so that as there is no evil harboured in the heart, there is none to employ the organs. Our Saviour has informed us, that it is that which cometh out of the man that defileth him ; but if there be a proper restraint on the tongue and lips, that which defileth cannot break through, and therefore cannot defile.

Now look round you and ask where the man is who keeps the door of his lips, who speaks no evil, who utters no guile, and who, at the same time lives a wretched, miserable life ? Can you find such an instance ? No, my friends, you never will find such an instance in our world. You will find that those, who refrain their tongues from evil, and their lips that they speak no guile, that is, who never opened their lips to deceive, are the jewels of society, they are the precious ones of the earth ; and let their temporal condition be what it may, the sun of peace is within, shedding his warming and enlivening rays through the vast regions of the soul.

2d. After the tongue and the lips are put under proper restraint, the next thing recommended is, that we shun evil and do good, that we seek peace and follow it.

Here we have good works recommended, and their reward plainly and clearly stated. A life of happiness and good days are promised as the reward, the sure reward of shunning evil and doing good, of seeking peace and following it. The whole duty of man is here comprehended ; for if we shun evil we shall do none, and if we do good, this constitutes us active and living members of society, and we are not only happy in ourselves, but we make others so likewise. Remember, it is not enough that we seek peace, but we must follow it, by which we shall shun strife and animosity, and come under the denomination of which the Saviour speaks and says ; " Blessed are the peace-makers , for they shall be called the children of God."

Once more, my friends, look round you and m-

quire after those who shun evil and do good ; and when you have found those who in any good measure are entitled to this character, then endeavour to ascertain whether they are the miserable and the wretched, or whether they enjoy life and see good days. The fact is, we all know, if we are willing to acknowledge the truth, that such people in society are more precious than fine gold. They are eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, wisdom to the foolish, knowledge to the ignorant, and bread to the hungry. They can say, by happy experience, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."

Now look again, examine the black list of the profane and vicious, those who restrain not their tongues from evil, nor their lips from speaking guile, who shun not evil but live in sin, who neither seek peace nor pursue it ; do they present a world of happiness ? Do they see good days ? Do you envy them their felicity ? No, you all know that the wickedness of the wicked is upon him. Go into a virtuous family, where order and decorum are preserved, where tongues and lips are kept under restraint, where peace is spoken and pursued, where evil is shunned and nothing but good acted, and there, my friends, is that which we all so much desire, **HAPPINESS**. The people enjoy life and see good days. And our text promises such a reward as this to all who will use these means, which are here recommended.

There may be two questions, which the hearer may desire to have answered.

1. Why should the whole duty of man be required, the reward stated, and nothing said concerning a future state of bliss ? Reply : Because, though the gospel brings life and immortality to light, and clearly promises, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," it no where informs us, that this state of incorruptible felicity and glory is the reward of our good works, but the gift of God in his Son.

2. Why have our pious clergy made such a mistake, and why have they been so wrapt up in this superstitious notion, that virtue is not rewarded, nor vice punished in this world, as long as the scriptures, reason, and experience all teach to the contrary? Reply : The clergy have erred in sitting up something for righteousness, which is nothing but a round of ceremonies, rites, and religious formularies, and condemning every one as nothing more than good moralists, who do not conform to these rites. They attend to them with great punctuality, and they think that this is righteousness. They look on the good moralist, who neglects these rites, and find him as happy a man, at least, in this world as they are ; and as they think that something is due to them, more than their neighbours are to receive, and as they do not obtain it in this world, they feel sure that they must in the world to come. We are, therefore, to make a distinction between the religious and the moral, which is an unnatural distinction, but one which is made by the superstition which we have considered. When all shall be convinced that to refrain the tongue from evil, and the lips that they speak no guile ; to shun evil and do good ; to seek peace and follow it, is the righteousness which God requires, and which hath the promise of a rich reward of rational happiness, in the present life, it is expected that all will thus obey God's commandments and enjoy life and see good days.

SERMON VI.

THE SINNER MEETS WITH DESERVED PUNISHMENT.

DELIVERED ON THE THIRD SABBATH IN DECEMBER, 1819.

1 PETER IV. 17, 18.

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?”

PERHAPS there are but a few passages of scripture, in the whole of the sacred volume, which contains more of weighty and important matter, in so few words, than is expressed in the one just read in your hearing, as the foundation of our present labours. While contemplating the vast extent of subject, the great variety of matter, and the important and solemn nature of the whole, the speaker feels, very sensibly, the impotency of his powers to do his subject justice, by dividing the word of truth in such a manner, as to give a suitable encouragement to the virtues of our religion, and at the same time, judicial discouragement and terror to evil doers, preserving a due regard to the dictates of divine authority, especially in those cases wherein human traditions are preposterously opposed to the divine testimony.

Human invention and ecclesiastical authority have established a tradition concerning this text, which we feel bound to oppose; because they have extended, by the use of this passage, the severity of the divine judgments infinitely beyond the plain and most definite denunciations of the divine law, which is certainly deserving of more respect than

It receives from those erroneous doctrines by which it is so directly opposed.

It is well known by you all, that this passage is generally used in support of the doctrine of future endless misery, and so explained as to indicate that the ungodly and sinner, who obey not the gospel, must suffer in a future state, and to all eternity, the indignation and wrath of Almighty God.

If this use of our text was only known as a piece of ancient history, of some opinion entertained in the dark ages of popery, the necessity of considering and disproving it now could hardly be maintained; but, my brethren, it is the present efforts which are now making to perpetuate this use of this and many other passages, which calls for our careful attention, that what may be done to do away this superstition, so dishonourable to our heavenly Father, should by no means be omitted. But the moment we open our mouth to plead for the mercy of our heavenly Father, in opposition to the endless unmerciful punishment contended for by tradition, a mighty host of superstition presents a most formidable and imposing front, and raises its terrific voice, denouncing vengeance upon us for heresy, and accusing us of denying the validity of the divine threatenings. With a confidence which defies all reason, and a pertinacity which is blind to truth and deaf to argument, the advocate of the ungracious doctrine of never-ending punishment will allow no chastisement for the crimes of the wicked, unless we subscribe to the popular creed, which annihilates divine charity, and dooms the erring offspring of the Father of spirits to the regions of despair, beyond the reach of the Redeemer's grace. But standing firm on the never-failing rock of unalterable truth, we may venture to take a more reasonable position, contend for the judgments of God to the extent of the divine severity, and yet allow that where sin abounds, grace bounds much more.

Our labours, therefore, on the subject before us, will be directed to set the several parts of our text before the hearer, in their own true sense, without an attempt to restrain any part from its most natural application. The following particulars require to be distinctly considered :

1. The house of God in distinction from those who obey not the gospel.

2. The judgments of God on both, and their relative severity.

3. The nature of that salvation which is indicated in our text by the following words : "If the righteous scarcely be saved." And

4. Ascertain the meaning of the words, "Where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

By house of God, we are to understand the brotherhood of believers in Christ Jesus, who were united as children of one family, and were faithful to the laws and ordinances of God. Jesus called his disciples the house of his Father, in John xiv. "Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." St. Paul very clearly expresses this subject in the following passages : Heb. iii. "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after ; but Christ as a son over his own house ; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Here we learn that believers belong to this house as long as they hold fast their confidence. Gal. vi. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." This household of faith is the house of God. Ephes. ii. Speaking to Gentile believers, the Apostle says, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the

apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

By the passages here noticed, we learn that the church of believers in the gospel were called the house of God, the household of faith, &c. in distinction from those who believed not. But we must make a distinction even among those who were unbelievers, who did not obey the gospel of God. Those of whom the apostle speaks in our text, as not obeying the gospel, must, of necessity, be those who had rejected it; for people in remote parts of the earth, who had had no opportunity of hearing of Christ or his doctrine, could not be justly denominated disobedient to its laws. This distinction you will all allow is a very natural one; for surely to speak of the judgments of God on people for not believing and obeying the gospel of which they had had no knowledge, would be a most unreasonable thing.

Our minds are therefore directed toward those who had heard the gospel, who had seen the wonderful and miraculous works of God, designed as evidences of its divinity. In a word, it is perfectly consistent with all circumstances relative to our subject, to fix the words of our text, "What shall the end be of them who obey not the gospel of God," on the Jewish nation, and particularly on Jerusalem, the sect of those authorities, which perpetually persecuted the believers in Jesus; and especially those who taught in his name.

It seems that we have the two classes mentioned in our text, clearly designated before us. The persecuted church of believers in Jesus on the one hand, and the Jews, who rejected the Messiah, persecuted and put him to death, and continued to persecute and vex his disciples, on the other.

The attention of the audience is now invited to the consideration of that judgment mentioned in our text, which began with the house of God, but ended on that wicked and adulterous generation, on whom Jesus denounced all the blood which was

shed, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias. At the time Jesus denounced on Jerusalem this judgment, it seems that their iniquity was not full ; for we read in the 23d of Matthew as follows: "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers. How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes ; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify ; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city ; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."

In this portion of our Saviour's words, we learn that those Jews who refused him and his doctrine, would also refuse his disciples and persecute them, for which they would be visited with those awfully severe judgments, which he not only in this place denounced on them, but which he so fully set forth to his disciples in the 24th and 25th chapters of this gospel, as well as in other passages recorded in the New Testament.

Now the relative severity of the sufferings of the house of God, and those devoted Jews, who obeyed not the gospel, is intimated in our text in the following words: "And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" That is, if we who adhere to the testimony of Jesus, and are faithful to his righteous cause, are visited with these sufferings from the hands of those who are the enemies of our Lord and master, and who have been his persecutors and murderers, what must be the punishment of their wickedness? The conclusion is evident ; it

must be vastly greater in its severity, than all that we suffer by their means.

There can be no reasonable doubt but St. Peter, when writing this encouragement to his brethren, who with himself suffered many things from the bloody hands of these enemies of Jesus and his doctrine, had in recollection these words of his divine master to that generation of vipers, which we have before quoted; for he was present when Jesus so vehemently denounced the judgments of God upon them. And he, no doubt, remembered what he heard his divine master say, which is recorded in the 24th of Matthew, and in the 21st of Luke. If the hearer will be so faithful as to examine those two chapters, he will understand the nature of this subject. The speaker cannot, in the limits of this discourse, quote all that belongs to it.

We have now come to where an important question may be profitably considered. The question is this: Did the apostle Peter here speak of the future punishment which the enemies of the gospel would suffer in the eternal world, and which they would have to suffer to an endless duration, which is the common doctrine on this text? We answer, No; for he was not authorised to go beyond the judgments which Jesus, his master, had denounced. And it is an undeniable fact, that in the dreadful judgments which the Saviour described as the punishment of the sins of his enemies, he did not extend their sufferings beyond a mortal state. And it is furthermore of importance to observe, that as Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil;" so he never extended the judgments of God beyond where the law of Moses and the testimony of the prophets had before carried them.

If we read Moses on the subject of the punishments which God threatened on Israel, in case of their disobedience, we shall be struck with the

greatest horror and astonishment, but shall read nothing about their being punished in a future state of existence. See Leviticus xxvi. Here are described all manner of evils to which man is incident in a mortal state. The famine, all manner of sickness, the pestilence, droughts, mildews, the sword of their enemies, their land in desolation, they in the most cruel captivities, where they should continually waste away before the sword, which would be continually drawn out after them. And in this account, be it remarked, God says, that this punishment is according to their sins. Therefore, whoever says that sin is not punished in this world, denies the word of God; and whoever says that sin is not punished according to its demerits in this mortal state, denies the divine testimony. See what the prophet Jeremiah sets forth in his Lamentations, chapter iv. In order to have any thing of a just idea of this description, it is necessary to imagine the case our own, and suppose ourselves besieged by a powerful enemy, shut in on every side, our stores exhausted, nothing in our markets, our wives and children looking pale upon us, we not a piece of bread to give them, our young men pined away, and appearing like shadows in the streets, our most delicate mothers, now losing all natural affection, lay their hands on their little children—But I cannot proceed. When I meditated this subject, my children came around me, and called up such feelings as I will not attempt to describe. Suppose our infuriate enemy finally enters our town victorious, our brave warriors, who had bared their breasts to the storm of war, are cut to pieces, and all falls into the hands of a most savage and barbarous soldiery. Such is but a faint description of what the prophet set forth in his Lamentations over Jerusalem, over which our Saviour wept, knowing that the time of her visitation was near. In the prophet's account, he makes a comparison, and says, "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my peo-

ple is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed upon her."

As recorded in the 21st of Luke, Jesus informed his disciples, that before the judgments which he prophesied would come on the Jews, should commence, they would suffer much persecution from their hands. With this in his mind, how perfectly natural was it for Peter, when speaking of the sufferings which the Christians endured from the persecuting hands of the Jews, to call their attention to consider how much greater sufferings their persecutors were doomed to endure, than they were suffering for the cause of Christ. To the same effect the Saviour spake, when he was going to the cross: "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, (O, how graceful must have been his appearance) Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

In his account of the destruction of the Jews, and of the vengeance of God upon them, Jesus was particular in his reference to what had been written on the subject; he says, "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Let it be further distinctly noticed, that in the three accounts, which are recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, of the denunciations of the judgments of God on the enemies of Jesus, for their sins, the whole is confined to that generation; and not the least intimation of punishment in a future state of existence, any

more than we find in the writings of Moses and the prophets.

We now proceed to speak of the nature of that salvation which is indicated in our text by the following words: "If the righteous scarcely be saved." In order to maintain the opinion, that the apostle meant to speak of the hereafter and endless punishment of the wicked, in our text, it has been supposed, that by the salvation of the righteous, the apostle meant an immortal state of glory and felicity. But let reason be exercised for a moment on this subject. What is meant by the word scarcely? Does it mean something that is full and complete? Does it not in fact necessarily mean something that is scanty? Yes, it most surely does. Now, is it reasonable or scriptural to apply this word to the state of immortality and eternal glory, which the scriptures promise? Take the words of Christ to the Sadducees for example, where he speaks of the resurrection state: "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." My brethren, do you candidly think that the word *scarcely* can properly be applied to this state of incomprehensible glory? Look at the description which St. Paul gives of the resurrection state, in his first epistle to the Cor. xv. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." The candor of this audience is requested to judge, whether this description of glory, power, life and immortality, can well be expressed by the words "scarcely saved?" Do you believe that the blessed in heaven will use such language to express their salvation, and say, "We are scarcely saved?" Is St. Peter now with him for whose cause he suf

fered in the flesh? And do you believe that he would express his salvation from mortality and death, in the words "scarcely saved?" No, St. Peter had no allusion to a future state in our text, neither on the part of the righteous, nor on the part of the ungodly. His meaning was, that the Christians would scarcely be saved from the dreadful calamities which were about to come like a storm on all the nation of the Jews. Jesus gave his disciples particular directions, where and in what manner they should make their escape from Jerusalem, to the mountains of Judea; and gave them to understand that great care, watchfulness and speed in flight, would be necessary. It was the temporal salvation of the church which Peter spake of, when he said, "If the righteous scarcely be saved;" for this was but a scanty salvation, many of the church suffered much, and some of them suffered death; according to the words of Jesus, before he was crucified.

Lastly: "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" This form of expression naturally signifies, that the ungodly and the sinner would be in a condition much more deplorable and distressing than that of the afflictions of the righteous. And this idea has all along been evidently exhibited in this discourse.

The Apostle no doubt kept his eye on the testimony of his master, who had in his hearing described the situation which his enemies would be in, in the day of their visitation. Following the account we have in the 24th of Matthew of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the distress of the people, the Saviour delivered three parables, which are recorded in the 25th chapter, evidently designed to represent the different situations of his friends and his enemies, when these judgments were sent. In the first parable, he represents his friends by virgins who were wise, who took oil in their vessels with their lamps, and being prepared, were received into the wedding when the

bridegroom came. But his enemies are represented by foolish virgins, who took no oil in their vessels with their lamps, who, not being prepared, or in readiness when the bridegroom came, were rejected. In the second parable, he represents his freinds by servants who had occupied their lord's money in a proper manner, and were received in to his favour and joy; but his enemies are represented by a wicked, slothful servant, who hid his lord's money, and made no improvement, and was censured by his lord, and cast into outer darkness, where were weeping and gnashing of teeth. In the third and last parable spoken on this subject, the divine teacher represented his friends, as having fed him when he was hungry, clothed him when he was naked, visited him when he was sick, and administered unto him when he was in prison; by which he signified the good offices which his friends should do to his disciples. As a reward for this, they are received into the gospel privileges and dispensation; but his enemies are represented as having neglected those kind offices, for which reason it was said to them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" or, in other words, for that earthly and carnal authority, which was inimical to the gospel, and for its agents, who persecuted the saints.

The judgments of God on the wicked are represented by fire, in sundry places in the scriptures; and the comparison is very just, for as fire consumes the fuel, so do these judgments consume the people. Will you say that the text says, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and therefore must mean in a future state? But cannot fire burn in this world as well as in another? Moses, speaking of the judgments of God on the Jews for their wickedness, says, Deut. xxxii. "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the moun-

tains. I will heap mischief upon them ; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter distraction," &c. Isaiah ix. "For wickedness burneth like a fire ; it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest ; and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire ; no man shall spare his brother." Jer. iv. "Circumcise yourselves unto the Lord, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem ; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." Jer. xxi. "O house of David, thus saith the Lord : execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn, that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." And much more might be quoted to the same purport. So Jesus usually represented the judgments of God on the enemies of the gospel by the similitude of fire ; but we have no authority for carrying these threatenings beyond this mortal state.

Before we close, it seems proper to improve our subject, to our own moral and religious advantage, by a due consideration of one grand maxim furnished by it, which is this : however those who fear God and work righteousness may be afflicted, it is certain, that those who live in rebellion against God and his commandments are in a much worse condition. This mortal state seems not to have been designed for perfect bliss, but it is a fact long established by experience, that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ; while it is equally evident that there is no peace to the wicked, and that the way of the transgressor is hard.

If the sober, the temperate, the industrious, the prudent, the pious, the virtuous, the kind and the

faithful, meet with many afflictions, and endure much sorrow in the world, what must be the miserable state of those who are plunged in the gulf of all manner of vice? You who live in the habits of love and tenderness with your families, and bring up your children in the fear and love of God, no doubt think you have trouble enough; but what do you think of those whose houses are the habitations of perpetual strife, and dens of every nameable vice? You who are blest with the belief and consolations of the gospel, and enjoy that hope which is an anchor to the soul, and endeavour to maintain the doctrine and religion of the Saviour, no doubt, frequently feel that you are scarcely saved from the misery of this state of corruption and sin; but if so, where are those who have none of these enjoyments? You, who when afflictions and misfortunes fall to your lot, can retire to your closets, make known your requests to your Father in heaven, cast all your cares upon him, feeling assured that he careth for you, and enjoy a spiritual communion with a present God, no doubt feel and know that you are scarcely saved from the plague of your own hearts, too prone to doubt and mistrust the goodness of your rock; what then is the condition of those who live strangers to the God of mercies, while surrounded with his favours, when the troubles of life are sent on their unshielded souls?

Do I not hear some feeling soul, alive to the blessings of grace, replying, say, I know the difference, I know what it is to lose a dear child, friend, or companion, when I knew not my heavenly Father's love, when I felt my soul to sink within me, and thick darkness surrounded me; but have, through grace, learned to trust in God, and find a calm retreat beneath the shadow of his wings.

To conclude: We see, my friends, that there is, in the moral government of our heavenly Father, an established administration, which secures to those who love and obey him a present complete

reward; and one which delays not to give unto the wicked the reward of his hands. To deny this, however popular the contrary opinion may be, is a moral delirium, a fatal insanity, which not only exposes us to danger, but absolutely plunges us into trouble. Let us recollect the words of Solomon, with which we close: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner."

SERMON VII.

THE NEW BIRTH.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE THIRD SABBATH IN JAN. 1838.

JOHN III. 3.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

THESE words were spoken by the Saviour to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." In reply, Jesus spake the words of our text.

The particular circumstances which have led to the choice of these words, and to a desire to call the attention of this audience to a careful consideration of this subject, are the following:

1. It is believed that the sentiment generally held by professors of Christianity, concerning this subject, is not only incorrect, but of an unhappy tendency, in regard to the cause of pure and undefiled religion.

2. This passage is frequently used to disprove the doctrine of impartial salvation, by the believers in the endless misery of some of the human race. It is not unfrequent that our opposers say, that it is utterly impossible that the unregenerate should be received into the kingdom of heaven, for Jesus himself said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3. Our opposers say, that we deny the necessity of being born again, and hold, that without repentance, sinners may enter the kingdom of heaven in their sins.

Hoping that our careful labours on this subject, may tend to do away, in some measure at least, those injurious errors, and to bring this portion of our Saviour's testimony into a clear light, in which the mind may travel understandingly, we have called the attention of this audience to a candid investigation of the words read for consideration.

The opinion which Christian people generally hold respecting this subject of the new birth, you all understand as well, perhaps, as it can be explained; for they themselves acknowledge that it is so mysterious that reason and the common powers of man's understanding can have no just views of the subject. It is believed that this new birth is a certain change mysteriously wrought in the nature of man, instantaneously converting the subject from nature to grace, as the terms are which are used to signify this invisible work in man. The moment this operation is effected, the subject is a new creature. Whereas before he was an heir of wrath, he is now a child of grace; whereas before he was exposed to the everlasting torments of hell, he is now quite out of all danger of this sort, and secure for ever.

Though the most profound divines are altogether incapable of describing the operation of this mysterious change, they are well acquainted with the travail of the mind before and after it takes place. Before one is born again, he must have certain views of the state he is in, and be exercised with certain horrors and fearful apprehensions. He must view himself such a sinner, by nature, as to deserve everlasting torments. He must see the justice of God in sending him to endless misery; and some say, he must be willing to go to this state of torment. He must be exercised with indescribable fears and horrors, and feel himself sinking

under the wrath of Almighty God. These fears and horrors, when they have increased to the highest possible point, cause the subject to cry out for mercy, like as one thrown from a precipice gives a shriek. In a moment hell is out of sight, all fear is gone, glory and delight are kindled up in the soul, no wrath is now seen in God, Jesus the Saviour, smiles with ineffable grace, and the whole scene is changed.

It is allowed, however, that there are various operations, and that some are carried through stronger and more sensible exercises than others. And it is believed that many pass this great and important change without knowing it. They know that they have certain exercises of mind, but do not know that they are born again. It is customary however, to submit to an examination by the minister, and some or all of the church, to which the subject proposes to join; they examine the state of the soul, and pass their judgment. If in favour of the subject's having been born again, all is well, and the church receives the candidate; but if not, if the account be not satisfactory, the candidate is rejected, and it is a rare case that such ever again make any pretensions to regeneration.

Let us now examine these new-born children of grace. How do they differ from other people, or from what they had been? It is contended that their nature is changed, that a radical metamorphose is effected, that the difference is such as justifies the belief, that the person in the state they were formerly in, was justly deserving endless misery, but now a lawful heir of everlasting life.

My friends, we are acquainted with many of these people, we have lived in society with them as long as we have lived. Now, the question is, how do they differ from other people? Will it be said that we should do wrong to inquire concerning the characters and conduct of our religious neighbours? We reply, the inquiry is by no means

designed to operate uncharitably towards any, but the subject is too important to dismiss without a candid investigation. It is pretended that there are two classes of people, one class are heaven-born and heaven-bound, the other class are the children of the devil, and are hastening home to their father's kingdom of darkness and misery; that we all belong to one or the other of these classes; that those who profess to be born again, and who belong to Christian churches, are the children of God, and that those who do not are of the other cast.

Now we inquire to know the difference. There is none in regard to all natural things. Both classes are alike in respect to every thing visible. Those who tell us that they are born again live on the same kind of food, drink the same kind of drink, breathe the same air as others do, and appear to sleep like other people, or as they did before they were born again. The body, then, is the same in both classes. The difference must be in their minds. But what difference is there in their minds? You are acquainted with both classes, what difference do you discover? Let candor be exercised on this question. Do we discover any more of what we are informed are heavenly principles in those who say they are born again, than in others? Are they more honest, more just, more merciful, more ready to forgive an injury, more charitable to the poor and needy; do they appear to be destitute of pride, of resentment, of hypocrisy, deceit, of any disposition to overreach in bargains; can you trade with them with less caution than with others? If you please, you may compare those who make the greatest pretensions to this new and holy nature, with the unregenerate scribes, pharisees and religious people among the Jews, in the days of Jesus on earth, and endeavour to ascertain the difference. These professors now suppose that those unregenerate Jews are now in hell, because they were not born again in this life; but expect to be in

heaven themselves, in a few days more, because they have had this great change. Now compare them. What is the difference? Those Jews believed that they were the favourites of heaven, so do these; they looked on themselves to be righteous and others to be wicked, so do these; those condemned sinners to everlasting wrath, so do these; those were highly incensed against Jesus because he was a friend to publicans and sinners, these are offended at the same thing; those believed that God loved them and abhorred others, so do these; those said all manner of evil against those who believed and propagated the love of God to sinners, so do these; those persecuted those who were not of their persuasion, so do these. Now, my brethren, what is the difference?

If you please, you may compare these new-born people with the unregenerate Mahometans; what is the moral difference? The Mahometans believe that God loves them and hates the Christians, these believe that God loves them and hates the Mahometans; and they reciprocally doom each other to eternal wrath. They both agree that they can enjoy heaven hereafter without the company of each other; each expect to be made eternally happy, while the other is eternally miserable. These new-born sons are desirous to convert every body to their creed, and so are the Mahometans.

After pursuing this inquiry to any reasonable length, the fact is, it results in nothing more favourable to these high pretenders, than to allow them a common rank among mankind. It will, being assisted with candor and charity, place this class of human beings just about on a level with the rest, with the exception of what is peculiar to superstition, which is always inclined to persecute whoever does not conform to its dogmas. Far be it from us to withhold from our religious professors, what is their due. We find them, in common life, like others. Some of them are, in all respects, what we all ought to be; and this is the case with

many who make no pretensions to this new birth. Others are what we all ought to endeavour not to be, and the same may be said of those who make no profession. This conclusion is made as the result of many years' inquiry and careful observation, concerning men and their pretensions.

From what has been said, we conclude that wrong notions concerning the new birth have been entertained in the church, and that these errors have led to unhappy consequences, making some bigoted and censorious, and tending to lead others to despair of the favour of heaven, because they had not passed through this unaccountable and mysterious change.

We may now ask why this passage of scripture should be so construed as to disprove the doctrine of the grace of God to all mankind? Let this new birth mean whatever it may, there is no intimation in the text or its connexion, that all men may not be born again.

If this new birth can be brought about by human agency, then it would seem that all men may be born again; and if not—if this new birth is wholly the work of God, certainly God is as able to produce this change in all men as in one. And if this change be necessary in order for man to be received into everlasting happiness in the eternal world, and if God be an impartial being, no doubt he will in this way prepare us all for that state of bliss.

But, says the hearer, do you or do you not believe in the necessity of the new birth? We answer, we do most sincerely believe the words of our Saviour to Nicodemus—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

That we may understand this subject, let us,

1st. Inquire what the Saviour meant by the kingdom of God; and,

2. What he meant by being born again, by which the subject may see this kingdom.

By the kingdom of God, we think the Saviour

meant the gospel which he preached, with all its principles and blessings to mankind. The following passages support this sentiment : Mat. xii. 28, " But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you ;" xxi. 31, " Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you ;" 43, " Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." By these passages, it seems that the Saviour intended to inform the religious Jews, that he came to them with the gospel kingdom, but that they refused to enter into it, but that publicans and harlots would more willingly receive it than they ; and that on their refusing it, it would be given to the Gentiles, who would receive it and obey its laws. Mark i. 14, 15, " Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand ; repent ye, and believe the gospel ;" iv. 26, &c. " And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground ; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."—" And he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it ? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth ; but when it is sown it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." Luke xvi. 16, " The law and the prophets were until John ; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it ;" xvii. 20, 21, " And when he was demanded of the pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them, The

kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, lo here ; or lo there ! for behold the kingdom of God is within you." Mat. xiii. 33, "Another parable spake he unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Rom. xiv. 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. iv. 20, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." These and many more passages which might be quoted, very plainly show that the gospel dispensation, its laws, its requirements, its joys and its peace, are signified by the kingdom of God, or kingdom of heaven. And it is worthy of notice, that the forerunner of Jesus preached, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ; and that Jesus and his disciples preached in the same manner.

Our next inquiry will be directed to know what preparation was necessary in order to introduce the Pharisees among the Jews into this kingdom. Nicodemus was one of the rulers of the Jews, and no doubt a religious character. He acknowledged that Jesus was a teacher come from God, but it seems he did not understand the spirit and nature of the gospel and doctrine which he taught. Now when Jesus said to this Jew, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God ;" there can be no reasonable doubt, that he meant, that a change of sentiments and opinions, of views and of feelings, was necessary to take place in him, in order for him to receive, and enter into the kingdom of God, so great and so entire, as to be suitably represented by being born again.

But the idea of a radical change of nature is by no means admissible. Nature is the same before birth as it is afterward. But as the new-born child is born to the visibility of the light of the natural world, so is one who is converted from the errors of superstition, whether Jew or Gentile,

to the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

This change, this new birth, is effected in the rational powers and faculties of man by means of information, which operate to change the sentiments, and to remove the errors of the mind, and of course to change the affections of the heart.

The nature of this new birth is signified by the following scriptures: See Mark x. 15—"Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In the place where our text is recorded, Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Water is used for cleansing, and it is the spirit that quickeneth; but water does not change the nature of the thing which it cleanses; and what the spirit quickens is that which it cleansed by the water. Now, it is evident that the water which cleanses men is the word of truth, or the testimony of the gospel; and the spirit that quickens is the spirit of love and grace, which a knowledge of divine truth kindles and wakes up in the soul. We read of this birth in John i. 12, 13, "But as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." By this it appears that a belief in the word, or doctrine of Christ produces this birth, which is attributed not to the will of man, but of God. 1 John v. 1, "Whosoever believed that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." 1 St. Peter i. 22, &c. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto the unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with pure hearts fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, the grass withereth, and

the flower thereof falleth away : but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." To these representations we add the words of St. Paul, Col. i. 13, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son."

When all these scriptures are put together, and when they are carefully and rationally considered, it appears that their true meaning signifies the conversion of men from false doctrines to the true knowledge of God, from the spirit of error to the spirit of truth. We cannot conceive of anything so mysterious and unaccountable as the changing the nature of man in a moment, and making of him a being different in nature from what he was before.—But we can reasonably believe that by being instructed, by being brought to the knowledge of the nature and spirit of the gospel of God's unchangeable love to mankind, not only different views, but different feelings and affections are realized in the mind.

" 'Tis education forms the common mind;
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."

If we look at the superstitious pharisees among the Jews, we shall find that their education was such as to render them most inimical to the gospel of Jesus. They vainly fancied that they were righteous, that their rites, traditions and formularies were all well pleasing to God, and that Jesus and his disciples, because they did not conform to their way, were the worst of men, and the doctrine they preached the most abominable of heresies. They verily believed that God hated all such perverse and wicked beings, and they were of the same temper, they hated Jesus, they hated his apostles, they hated the gospel. Under all these circumstances, under the ponderous weight of all their traditions, we may easily conceive how hard it was for them to receive and acknowledge Jesus and his testimony; and how impossible it

was, while covered with such thick darkness, for them to see, or enter into the kingdom of God, which is the gospel of his grace.

Or, if we contemplate the state of the Gentiles, a people educated in the grossest idolatry, and in the habit of serving their many gods in a manner shocking to humanity, we can conceive at once how hard it was for them to turn from their dumb idols to serve the living God.

There is not recorded in history, perhaps, a more remarkable case of the conversion of an individual, than we have of the conversion of St. Paul. Now, there can be no doubt, but this man passed through what our Saviour meant by being born again ; and, in fact, our Christian people, who make of this new birth such a mystery, all acknowledge that St. Paul was really born again. But let us humbly ask the question, if this child of grace ever gave such a relation about being born again as our young converts do in these times ?

We are knowing to what our traditions have established, and we have heard converts relate that they saw the justice of God in their everlasting condemnation, have felt the most tormenting fears of being cast into hell, and have been brought to realize the positive certainty of such a state hereafter. But, my friends, do you read anything like all this in the several accounts of St. Paul's conversion ? No ; certainly he gave no such relation. Nor is there any such relation recorded in the scriptures of the exercise of any, who were converted to Christianity.

These frightful stories and terrible representations are brought into fashion for a certain purpose, which superstition can better promote by such means, than by simple honest truth.

Our subject may be represented by those changes which sometimes take place in the minds of men respecting political governments.

If we cast our minds back to the time when these States were under the British government,

we find a people, who, notwithstanding they had a strong sense and love of liberty, were educated in the monarchial system, and had many predilections in favour of a kingly government. And when the full time had come for a new system to be introduced, and a few enlightened politicians boldly stepped forward to point out the corruption of monarchy, and the oppressions it was meditating to fix on the people in all future time, and to call the attention of Americans to the true system of political liberty, and a representative government, the times presented many features similar to those when the gospel was first propagated in the world.

In one view of the great subject, the Saviour said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." So was it in the trying day when a nation was to be born again, politically speaking. Such were the views of many, and such their love for the distinctions of monarchy, for the difference of the high and low, that they had rather part with every thing else, than to part with their notions of king, of lord, and the trappings of monarchy. To such it might have been said, that unless they were born again they could not enter into the system of liberty, and the rights of man.

What an amazing change was effected in the minds of the people in the times to which we allude. This change may very justly be called a political regeneration. The sentiments of men were changed, their habits broken up, their minds became enlightened, and the country emerged from political darkness to light, and from the power and dominion of monarchy to the system of rational liberty and independence.

If we read the history of the reformation from

popery, we shall find a striking resemblance of our subject. For a long time there had been lit up one light after another; which shining through the *dark clouds* of popish superstition and ecclesiastical tyranny, seemed to promise reform; but as it fared with the prophets of old, so did it happen to these first protestors; but when the full time came for the work to commence in earnest, and to be carried on with success, when Luther rose like a light in a dark place, then did the work of ecclesiastical regeneration begin. But how was it opposed by the powers of the church. How difficult was it for a people, who had been *educated* in that dark system of superstition to enter into the kingdom of this new order of things. How great was the change and how difficult to be effected. This was a regeneration in the affairs of the church, and men's minds had to undergo no small change to relinquish these relations to popery, and to take up their connexions with the reformed church.

Similar observations and remarks might be made respecting the dissenters from the episcopal church; and also respecting more modern dissenters from the presbyterian and congregational communions.

But, my friends, the work of regeneration is not yet finished in this world; the necessity of men's being born again, still continues. The decline of the church was gradual, from its primitive purity; it went down step by step; one corruption after another was introduced and sanctioned as orthodox; and it must be regenerated in the same manner, by degrees: and every step which is taken is a new birth, and we pray for regular pains and safe deliverance!

The present day seems by no means dissimilar to former periods. The gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, a system of impartial love and salvation to the world, is now performing the miracle of regeneration, and thousands are born again from

the partial systems and creeds of the church, to the acknowledgment of the universal mercy and grace of Zion's King. These times present us the same symptoms of moral disorder as all past times of reformation experienced. He that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the spirit. Partiality is partiality, whether in Jew, Greek, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, or any other sect or denomination. And though the Jew and the Gentile may widely disagree, they will unite to persecute Jesus and his doctrine. Though Herod and Pilate were enemies, they were friends when Jesus was to die.

It is but a few days since we saw certain denominations, now among us, at the greatest distance one from another, holding no kind of fellowship ; but now made friends, have joined hands to put down this monstrous heresy, which threatens to deluge our country with the belief that the Father of our spirits is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works ! To these people we say, as Jesus said to Nicodemus, " Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Jews said that Jesus was a Samaritan, and had a devil ; they said he was a friend to publicans and sinners. My brethren, we have just such Jews now, and just such a friend to publicans and sinners.

Having extended the illustrations of our subject as far as the present opportunity will justify, let us endeavour to profit by a few reflections designed to improve our Christian graces.

You will recollect the many exhortations, which the Saviour gave to his disciples, and which the apostles used to incite believers to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. It is not enough that we are born again, that we have passed from death unto life, we must conduct ourselves as the children of God, we must obey the laws of this new kingdom into which we are

born. The Law, the supreme law of king Emmanuel, is impartial love to all mankind, it requires that we do to others as we would that they should do to us ; and we are to measure to all men such measure as we are willing to receive.

This is the law, and this the rule of the kingdom. And if we know that we are not conformed to these requirements, let us listen to the voice of our Redeemer, who says, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This kingdom is a realm of light, therefore we must let our light shine before men, that they, beholding our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

SERMON VIII.

THE CONDEMNATION OF FALSE BELIEF.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE SECOND SABBATH IN FEB. 1820.

2 THESSALONIANS II. 11, 12.

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie ; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

My friends, we are called to the consideration of this remarkable passage of divine truth, for the same reason for which we have been so often invited, in a pressing manner, to explain many other particular portions of the sacred testimony.

The general system of doctrine, which we profess to believe, embracing the whole family of our race of being as the subjects of the divine goodness, and salvation by Jesus Christ ; and our public labours having been, in some measure, specially directed to convince our hearers of so glorious a truth, and one so favourable to the rational happiness of mankind, seem to have excited some alarm among our brethren who profess a belief that limits the divine goodness, and embraces but a few of mankind in the designs of mercy. This alarm has called into action the energies of our opponents, who seem to have exerted themselves in searching the scriptures to find testimony to disprove the universal, impartial goodness of our heavenly Father. Such passages as have been most relied on, as evidence in this case have been, from time

to time presented for our solution, which has been the cause of our so frequent attention to scriptures of this complexion. The passage now read for consideration was presented with an urgent request that it should be noticed as early as this evening ; and it is in compliance with this urgent solicitation that we propose our present labours.

Notwithstanding these frequent requests have induced your public servant to most laborious exertions, and to no small fatigue of both mental and physical powers, yet he feels more than compensated by the favourable success which has evidently attended his feeble exertions, and the very extensive attention to the doctrine of universal goodness which has thereby been excited, not only in this vicinity, but in many parts of the country, occasioned by your liberally patronizing the publication of those discourses. This reflection brings to mind the wisdom and goodness of God, in that he makes use of the smallest means, and means which are despised by the wisdom of this world, to extend the knowledge of his grace and the glory of his name. Being supported by these encouragements, we are neither weary nor faint in our minds, but feel determined not to shun to declare the whole counsel of God, manifested in him, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

The method by which we propose treating our subject is the following.

- I. State in a concise manner the way in which this passage is generally used to prove that our heavenly Father will finally prove unmerciful to some of his rational offspring.

- II. Endeavour to disprove this common use of the text, by rational argument and by scripture testimony. And,

- III. Attempt to explain the true sense of the text in harmony with the impartial goodness of God to mankind.

The way in which this passage is used to prove

that God will finally be for ever unmerciful to some of the human race is the following—1. It is confidently believed that error in doctrine is so very offensive to the divine Being that he is disposed to punish those who believe in false doctrine eternally, as a penalty for the crime of such belief. This idea of the everlasting punishment of heresy, or false doctrine, has long been entertained and nourished in the bosom of the church, and while the civil power was under the control of the clergy, heresy was a crime which was punished with death. Thus the stake and fagots were the powerful arguments by which the divine displeasure against error, was faithfully maintained ! And even these excruciating tortures were considered as means of mercy, by which it was hoped a reformation might possibly be effected ; while it was believed, and that beyond a shadow of doubt, that the torments which awaited the heretic in the future world were infinitely more severe than those which were inflicted by ecclesiastics who professed to have compassion on these victims of divine vengeance. Though it has pleased our merciful Father in heaven to render the power weak, which exercised such barbarity on mankind, yet among many the sentiment, that those who imbibe error are obnoxious to eternal wrath, is held as sacred truth ; so that we often hear zealous professors lamenting the fate of such, who go out of this world in a belief which differs from their own.

2. As the belief of error is thought to be sufficiently criminal, in the mind of God to justify him in making his rational offspring for ever miserable, that this ungracious end may be brought about constantly with justice, it is believed that God sends strong delusion into the minds of his creatures, that they may believe a lie, that he may have a just occasion to damn them.

3. Tradition has fixed the meaning of the words damned, damnation, condemnation, &c. to signify a state of endless misery in the future world. It

will not allow that these words may be used to express the condition of unbelievers and sinners in the present state. Thus the unmerciful scheme is made out, and the text under consideration is made to speak and maintain the awful doctrine of the endless misery of a great portion of the human race.

Let us now call these opinions in question, and see if reason and scripture will at all countenance this common use of our text. Why should error in opinion be so highly offensive to the God of truth as to move him to exercise an unmerciful vengeance on those who are blinded by it? The divine Being receives no damage from our mistakes, he is by no means injured by all the errors that ever existed in the world. That we may be able to judge correctly on this subject, let us bring it within the reach of common observation. Suppose a large number of the citizens of this metropolis should entertain wrong notions concerning the line of conduct which the chief executive of the United States has determined to pursue. Those opinions, though altogether erroneous, have no power either to injure the president, to disappoint him in his purposes, or to change either his mind or his measures. Suppose furthermore, that the president comes to the knowledge of these false opinions, would he act like a reasonable magistrate if he suffered himself to be offended with these citizens on account of their errors, or could his conduct be upheld by the eternal law of justice should he proceed to deprive them of every possible enjoyment, and to subject them to every suffering which his ingenuity could invent? My friends, do you believe that our law characters and judges of jurisprudence would openly and zealously contend, that these citizens, who were so very base as to entertain wrong opinions concerning the president's schemes, ought in justice to be put to the worst of deaths? Do you think that these characters would undertake to make the

people believe that these men ought to die for the glory of the president, and for the honour of his wrath? However absurd this may appear to the eye of candor, it is but a faint representation of this notion concerning the justice of punishing rational beings eternally, for the errors found in their religious creeds. Whatever errors there may be, and truly there is enough of them, they certainly cannot injure the great omnipotent governor and president of the universe; they cannot, in any possible way, tend to derange or frustrate his all-wise plans and measures of government. Why then do our pretended divines, who profess to be learned in the science of divinity, openly and boldly contend that we all ought to be punished for ever and ever because we have erred in our opinions? Why do they represent the independent ruler of all worlds as being infinitely offended at our mistakes? Or why do they pertinaciously contend that this everlasting condemnation is indispensable for the glory of God's vindictive justice?

What earthly father would punish his offspring unmercifully because they, in consequence of their ignorance, should entertain wrong opinions respecting his plans and future conduct?

Will you say, this is all nothing but carnal reasoning? We reply; true and natural reasoning is not carnal, it is such as our blessed Redeemer employed in giving divine instruction to the people, who listened to hear the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. He who was sent of God reasoned as follows: "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? In this reasoning, the Saviour calls the attention of his hearers to the consideration of the parental affections and love, and inculcates the idea that our heavenly Father is as

much kinder to his dependent offspring than earthly parents, as he is more perfect in moral goodness. Now if we put the least dependence in this reasoning of the blessed Redeemer, there remains not a shadow of propriety in the notion that the great Father of our spirits can treat us unmercifully for our errors.

Let us examine a case or two of the Saviour's reasoning, where he notices, not only errors in opinion, but perverseness and obduracy in spirit and disposition. You will readily call to mind that remarkable instructive parable of the labourers in the vineyard. It evidently appears that those who went to their labours in the morning, having contracted, for a penny a day, were settled in the opinion that they who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour would not receive so much at evening as they. It moreover appears that when those first came to see that those who had wrought but one hour were paid every man a penny, they then conceived an opinion that they should receive more ; but being paid, according to contract, every man a penny, it seems that they immediately imbibed another wrong opinion, for they thought that the conduct of the householder was unjust. They therefore, "murmured against the good man of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." Here were three erroneous, heretical opinions ; two of them concerning what labourers were to receive, and the other of the heinous character of accusing the great and good householder of unjust rewards.

Now, my friends, how were these murmuring heretics dealt with ? Were they deprived of the penny they had earned and received ? Were they put to unmerciful tortures for their errors, and murmurings ? No, they were treated kindly and rebuked in mercy. "Friend, I do thee no wrong ; didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this

last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?"

Another instance of error in opinion, noticed by the divine teacher, is the case of the prodigal son. After being chastised by his own folly and the providence of God into a state of humble penitence, and after he had formed the highly commendable resolution to go home to his father, he then entertained an erroneous sentiment respecting the terms on which his father would receive him and grant him bread. Not as a son, but as an hired servant did he hope to be received; not as a free unmerited gift, but as the recompense of labour did he anticipate eating bread in his Father's house. Here are two heretical opinions, pursuant to which the prayer of the humbled profligate was presented to his Father. His creed embraced two notions, by no means uncommon in our times. 1st. That by transgression sonship is lost, and 2d. That by works the sinner must expect to obtain the bread of life. My dear friends, did these errors so provoke the father as to induce him to vindictive wrath? In room of the affections of a father, did the son receive the unmerciful vengeance of a tyrant? No, these errors were quickly removed by a gorgeous shining robe, the choicest in the father's possession, by a glittering ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, by festivity graced with music and dancing. In agreement with these arguments St. Paul indicates that our great high priest has "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." If we would have a correct idea how our heavenly Father treats those who are in error, we may be assured that this treatment is the same with that exercised by truth on those in error, by love on such as hate, by light on such as are in darkness.

This common sentiment, which arms the Father of mercies, with implacable wrath against his erring offspring, while it is highly dishonourable to

him and tormenting to man, gives unbounded latitude to the censorious spirit of bigotry and superstition, while it propels, with wonderful facility, the ponderous machinery of persecution. From all this we appeal to our all-gracious and merciful high priest, who has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, who loved us and gave himself for us, and who washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Accordingly as we have promised, we will now proceed to explain our subject in harmony with the universal, impartial goodness of our Father in heaven. In doing this it will be necessary to show,

1st. The occasion of the delusion noted in our text.

2d. The nature of this delusion ; and,

3d. The nature and utility of the condemnation which is consequent on this delusion.

By casting our eyes over the context, we find that the Apostle was speaking of people who received not the love of the truth. And it is evident that these are they who are the subjects of the delusion and condemnation mentioned in our text ; and their not receiving the love of the truth the reason why God sent this delusion on them. This is further strengthened by the concluding clause of the text itself. "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Their having pleasure in unrighteousness, and their receiving not the love of the truth are necessarily connected ; for whoever does not love the truth, of course loves unrighteousness.

We now have occasion to bring into view the universal, impartial goodness of God to mankind as the grand truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the want of the love of which subjects men to strong delusion and condemnation, and proves that they have pleasure in unrighteousness. Perhaps the hearer may think that too much is here assumed, and that the ground taken is not tenable ; but by

the assistance of careful attention the whole argument will appear as clear as light in a moment. This simple fact proves the whole, viz **THE TRUTH IS WHAT WE OUGHT TO LOVE.** Whoever loves a doctrine, which is contrary to universal, impartial goodness, has pleasure in unrighteousness. But in universal, impartial goodness there is no unrighteousness. These statements are self-evident facts, and prove to a moral certainty the ground we have taken.

Among all the opposers of impartial grace, and universal salvation by Jesus Christ, we find none who are hardy enough to state in so many words, that they do not desire to have the doctrine true. They will say they do not believe it, they will say that the whole bible is opposed to it, they will call it heresy, the doctrine of devils; they will say it is this strong delusion named in our text, which God has designed shall eventuate in the endless misery of those who believe it; but after all you ask them to pause a moment, ask them to exercise candour, to call into action their best, their most benevolent, and most god-like feelings, and then say whether they cordially love their own doctrine, which dooms millions of the human family to endless woe? and they will answer in the negative; and with surprise will ask you if you think them so ungodly as to desire the everlasting misery of a single soul?

But, my friends, we must look on the dark side of human nature, we must examine the awful gulf of human depravity; and however repugnant to all goodness it may appear, it is a fact, that low down in the dark, the bottomless pit of wickedness, in the sulphurous fire of jealousy, pride and hate, lies the salamander of partiality. If there never had been hearts in the world that were in love with partiality, the doctrine of universal, impartial goodness, would never have been hated and called a heresy. This partiality is the essence of unrighteousness, and whoever loves it cannot love the truth. This partiality, therefore, is that want

of the love of truth, and that pleasure in unrighteousness, which are the occasion of the strong delusion mentioned in the passage before us.

Let us now endeavour to understand the nature of this strong delusion, which God has sent to those who love the unrighteousness of partiality. Here we find that this delusion is the natural offspring of the partial, carnal heart; it is a partial doctrine. This delusion is rendered strong by the wickedness of the heart. In the parable of the labourers, we have the nature of our subject represented to the life; and as we have already improved this portion of scripture to illustrate one branch of our inquiries, we may now call it to our assistance in this. First then observe, that those who bore the burden and heat of the day received not the love of the truth, they had pleasure in unrighteousness. The truth was, the householder was impartially good to all, this truth these first labourers did not love, but had a pleasure in the expectation that their fellow-labourers would be worse off than themselves at the close of day. Now what was this delusion? Answer, just such as would naturally grow from such wicked hearts. They believed that the householder was altogether like themselves, they believed that they were peculiar favourites, and that there would be a wide difference made between them and their fellow-labourers. And this delusion was rendered strong by the selfishness of their ungracious hearts.

Another lively representation of this delusion, of the nature and strength of it, is given by the Saviour in the character of the elder son of the father of the prodigal. This son did not receive the love of the truth. The truth was, the father loved both his sons equally, and his designs were impartially benevolent towards them. But this truth the elder son did not love; but had pleasure in the unrighteous expectation that his brother would never more share of their father's love and bounty. Now this delusion, as to opinion, was

the natural offspring of his partial, wicked heart. He believed that his father was like himself, full of hatred and indignation towards the miserable, the wretched prodigal; and this delusion was rendered strong as the bars of a castle, by the wicked pleasure of his partial heart. Had this brother entertained a love for the truth, had he loved his brother as he did himself, had he been exercised with kind fraternal affections, he would have longed to see his brother return, he would have made himself acquainted with the heart and will of his father concerning his brother, and would have believed in his goodness, his impartial goodness to his children, and believing would have rejoiced. But his heart was different from this and his mind was deluded into the opinion that there was no mercy for the prodigal.

If it be asked why it is said that God shall send them strong delusion, and how it is consistent for the very fountain of truth to delude his creatures, it may be replied, that he no otherwise does this than by an established law in nature, by which every cause must be followed with its natural consequences. If men are possessed of partial and corrupt hearts, if they are governed by an uncharitable spirit, if, in one word, they feel that their happiness depends on the misery of their fellow-creatures, the natural consequence is a religious belief which is as partial as their corrupt hearts. By the prophet Isaiah God says, of the house of Israel, "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them."

But our text says, "that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." What occasions this damnation? Answer, their believing a lie. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they might believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had

pleasure in unrighteousness." Had they not believed a lie they would not have been damned. Now christian hearers, when and where can this damnation exist? The answer is plain; it being the consequence of believing a lie, of being deluded, it exists in this time and state of unbelief and delusion. If this delusion, if this lie shall exist in the mind of the deluded to all eternity, then might this condemnation exist as long. But if the cause be ever removed, then must the consequence come to an end. It may be asked whether this damnation can be endured in this mortal state? It must exist where and when the delusion exists, for it depends on it.

We have noticed that the words damned, condemned, &c., have been traditionally made to apply to a future, eternal state, but Jesus himself speaks as follows: "For God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." St. Paul speaks to Timothy of some as "having damnation," in the present tense. To the Romans he says: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat." St. Peter speaks of some "whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not." All this reads in this world where unbelief and sin are, and where their consequences are.

Let us notice the condemnation which the labourers suffered, who were told by the householder that he would give unto the last even as unto them. This was a plain declaration of impartial truth and equal goodness. And this testimony was that which condemned them. Hear the condemnation of the brother of the prodigal, which was indicated by the following reply of the father, "Son, thou art ever

with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found." Here we see that impartial and equal goodness of the father, the love of which this elder brother did not receive, but had pleasure in the unrighteous expectation of the final exclusion of his brother from the favour and bounty of the father. It was this impartial goodness which condemned him who loved not his brother.

Let us here inquire if it were possible for the benevolent and bountiful father of these two sons to be equally and impartially good to them, without condemning the son who did not love his brother? No, this you all know was impossible. Then let us ask for the nature and utility of this condemnation. At once it is seen, that this condemnation was designed to bring the condemned to a sense of truth and to the love of the same, that he might be delivered from the partiality and cruelty of his wicked heart, love his brother and rejoice in the father's impartial favour. But if the condemnation is extended beyond this object, and executed on the transgressor in a way to prevent this return to filial duty and brotherly love, it thereby sets up this very wicked principle which it condemned. Therefore it is clear that the damnation mentioned in our text is designed to aid the cause of universal, impartial goodness.

To conclude:—How divinely amiable does our Father in heaven appear, when seen through the medium of these self-evident arguments. On the one hand he is inviting the profligate and profane from their prodigality and wretchedness, to his bounty and love; while on the other, he speaks to the superstitious and partial, who are the subjects of this strong delusion, in the melting language of parental affection, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine; it was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

SERMON IX.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE FOURTH SABBATH IN FEB. 1820.

ST. MATTHEW XIII. 47—50.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:—Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.—So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.—And shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

CHRISTIAN friends, the passage now read in your hearing claims your most serious and candid attention, for the following reasons :

I. It was spoken by the great and good teacher, who was sent of God, as the way, the truth, and the life ; and therefore treats of nothing but what we are all deeply interested to know.

II. It is one of the many passages which are usually employed in support of the doctrine of an eternal state of indescribable tortures, in which the wicked are to suffer in the future state ; and therefore is a passage which is necessarily called up for investigation in the great controversy which now occupies the public mind, on the subject of doctrine. We say, the controversy which now occupies the public mind ; for notwithstanding all the caution used by the clergy to prevent the free discussion of the question, whether all men are embraced in the benevolent designs of our Saviour's grace, or only a part, it is very evident that no question in divinity excites at this time so much interest and attention as this. For many years

after the doctrine of unlimited salvation was preached in this country, by a few faithful ambassadors of our divine master, the orthodox clergy very frequently sought opportunities to investigate this great question, and to refute the doctrine for which these few contended. But these affairs now wear a very different aspect. In room of a desire to meet this weighty subject before the world, and contend against it, only where they expect to be answered, constant prudence is employed to direct the public mind to other topics, and never even to think of this, only as a subject embracing such dangerous tenets as to render it unsafe to inquire into them, or listen for one moment to any arguments in their support. By these means, the wisdom of this world is endeavouring to make the best of the superstition and credulity of the people, that is possible. To serve this interest by these means, the passage now before us is often recited to the following purport : The Saviour has informed us concerning the awful condition of sinners in the future state, by the application of the parable of the net that was cast into the sea. This net gathered of every kind, good and bad ; but when it was drawn on shore, they sat down and made a separation, gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. Of this the following solemn and awful application is made. "So shall it be at the end of the world ; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." And here the speaker will add ; no comment is necessary ; the words of the Saviour are too explicit to need explanation ; this is the closing scene, it is so to be done at the end of the world. Such observations and remarks are made in a most solemn tone of voice, accompanied with a studied horror of countenance which as it were, petrifies the hearer into a gloomy despair. In such cases it is left entirely to tradition to say what is meant by the end of the

world, and by the furnace of fire; for should the question be allowed to exist in the mind, what our Saviour meant by the end of the world, and this furnace of fire, and should we allow ourselves to search the scriptures to ascertain these facts, it would be seen at once, that they have no relation to a future state of existence.

III. It is what we all owe to the cause of truth and to ourselves, to lay prejudice aside, and to investigate this subject with all the impartiality and honesty of mind of which we are capable. To do otherwise, and retain our early errors and prejudices in opposition to reason and divine revelation, is the same kind of conduct as that of the Jews, who, being destitute of candor, and averse to reason, said that Jesus was a Samaritan and had a devil.

In our endeavours to obtain a correct view of what our Saviour meant, when he delivered the words of our text, the following particular questions will be duly noticed.

1. What is meant by the kingdom of heaven, and by its being, like a net that was cast into the sea which gathered of every kind?

2. What is meant by the end of the world, and the separation of the wicked from among the just? And,

3. What is meant by the furnace of fire into which the wicked are said to be cast?

As it is of the first importance to obtain a correct idea of the time to which our text alludes, the hearer is requested to be looking after this particular through the whole of these inquiries.

When we read of the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, in the New-Testament, if we are at all careful to observe the connexion, or the similes by which it is represented, we shall at once see that a future, immortal state is not the subject. When Jesus said to the pharisees, in reply to their blasphemy; "But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,"

he certainly did not mean that a future eternal state had come to them. When he said ; " It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," he could not mean, that it was thus difficult for a rich man to enter into a future state ; for we see not but the rich are equally subject to die and to go into another state of being as the poor. When the Saviour told the pharisees that publicans and harlots should go into the kingdom of God before them, we have not the least reason to believe that he meant that publicans and harlots would die and go into the eternal world before they did. When the blessed Redeemer told the chief priests and the elders, that the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, most surely he did not mean that the future, eternal world would be taken from them, and given to somebody else. When Jesus told the scribe, who answered him discreetly, that he was not far from the kingdom of God, he did not mean that he was nigh his death, and a future state. But it is evident that by the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, the Saviour meant the dispensation of the gospel, which was the ministry, in which he was sent to the house of Israel.

Let the hearer now carefully associate this meaning with the words, " kingdom of God," and then observe how perfectly rational the before mentioned passages will appear. " But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come unto you." That is, if you rightly understand that the miracles wrought by me, are performed by the spirit of God, then certainly my ministry is truly of God. " It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." That is, those who are rich, being covetous are extremely averse to the liberal spirit of the gospel, and are loth to dispose of their property in the way which

the difficulties of persecution will render necessary. "Publicans and harlots, go into the kingdom of God before you." Meaning that the publicans and the harlots, being free from the superstition, bigotry, self-righteousness, and religious pride, all which were so very peculiar to the pharisees, that it was much easier for them to adhere to a dispensation of mercy and forgiveness, to a ministry of impartial goodness, than for those who thought themselves righteous and despised others. We see the nature of this subject in our times. It is not so difficult for those, who have made no profession of religion in the partial systems of men, to receive the truth, the impartial truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is for those, who have professed the religion of the wisdom, the partial wisdom of this world; and who think themselves so much better than their neighbour, as to say; stand by, come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou. "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Here it is evident, that the Saviour meant, that the dispensation of the gospel in which he was sent to the Jews, would be taken from them, and given to the Gentiles, who would receive it, and obey its requirements. We have an account of the fulfilment of these words of the Saviour in the 13th of Acts; when Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch, and there preached the gospel of the kingdom, the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, which caused these servants of Christ to reply to their countrymen as follows; "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth." Here is an instance of the kingdom's being taken from the Jews, to whom it was first sent,

and given to the Gentiles: for when the Gentiles heard this saying, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.

When the Saviour perceived that the scribe gave a discreet answer respecting the divine requirement to love God, and said; thou art not far from the kingdom of God, it is evident that he meant that he was possessed of an understanding which approached very near to the pure light of the gospel of his divine mercy.

In the chapter where our text is recorded, the Saviour compares the kingdom of heaven to a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. Here it is plain that he represented his doctrine which he preached, by wheat sown in a field, and the false doctrines which would be introduced into his church by tares. In the same chapter the divine teacher represents the kingdom of heaven by "leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The hearer will readily perceive that in this last parable the Saviour designed to set forth the efficacy of his doctrine, the sure progress it would make, and the final reconciliation of all men to its laws and requirements. The parable of the mustard seed is very similar, and so is that of a man's casting seed into the ground, its growing night and day, and producing first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

By what we have noticed already, it appears that the Saviour by his comparisons of the kingdom of heaven, varied his representations accordingly as he would represent different particulars. When he would represent both true doctrine and false, he made use of wheat and tares; but when he would represent the simple and pure operations and progress of the gospel of his grace, he used the similitude of leaven; and so in the parable under consideration, when he would represent that many

would come into the profession of the gospel, would appear to be converts from the vain traditions of the elders, to the spiritual religion of Jesus, who yet in fact were no others than such as said to him, Lord, Lord, but did not the will of his Father in heaven ; or the man who came to the wedding without a suitable garment ; or those who were represented in the parable of the sower, as those who received seed on stony places, and were not sufficiently rooted in the truth and love of it to endure persecutions ; or those who received seed among thorns, whose attention to earthly things prevented the growth of the truth in them, he compares the kingdom to a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.

We are now brought to contemplate our subject as applicable to what was then taking place, when the Saviour was engaged in the ministry with his twelve, and with his seventy. When he called Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother, from their professional business, who were fishermen, he said to them ; " follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." To indulge in the use of the figure under consideration, we may say, that Jesus and those whom he ordained to preach the gospel of the kingdom, cast the net of their ministry, drew it through all the land of Judea, and encompassed a vast multitude, who professed to believe the gospel ; some of them were genuine converts, some followed for the sake of the loaves, some joined themselves to the name because others did, not having the " root of the matter" in them.

In this view of our subject, we discover what is perfectly similar to what we know of human nature in the present time. To say nothing concerning the differences which exist between the various denominations, it is obvious that many make a profession of Christianity, who neither know nor feel its vital principles. These are known by their fruits ; men do not gather grapes

of thorns, nor figs of thistles. We see all that worldly pride, and haughtiness, all that spirit of judging and condemning, all that bigotry and superstition among many of our professors, which characterized the enemies of Jesus in the days of his flesh. And though such people may profess Christianity either in consequence of deceiving themselves, or with a design to deceive others, they are no better than bad fish caught in a net designed and used to procure the good.

Let these remarks suffice on our first particular, which is to understand what the Saviour meant by the kingdom of heaven, and by its being like a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, both good and bad.

Our next object is to ascertain what is meant in our text by the end of the world, and the severing the wicked from among the just.

By the end of the world, according to the vain traditions of the church, is meant the end of the duration of this material system which we inhabit. And as we read in several passages of scripture, of the great sufferings of many at the end of the world, tradition finds it perfectly easy to carry these sufferings into a future state. But our preachers who endeavour to support this doctrine of future torment, as we have already hinted, depend entirely on tradition to apply the end of the world in this way. We never hear them take up the subject, by calling the attention of their hearers, or readers to a careful inquiry for the scripture use of these words, "the end of the world." They never undertake to prove, by any sort of argument, that by the end of the world is necessarily meant the dissolution of the present order of the universe. As long as they think the people believe this notion, they have no occasion to prove it, and the probability is that when they find that the people are better informed on this subject, they will then say nothing about it.

Though we are as we ought to be, very far

from desiring to find fault with others, merely to set the public mind against them, we do feel constrained, most solemnly to protest against the common practice of terrifying the minds of the naturally timid, with the awful representations of what is usually called, The end of the world. It is true, the philosopher can carelessly pass the idle hour in hearing what he believes is an idle story, without absolutely tormenting his own feelings; but women and children suffer incalculably in consequence of those representations, which they hear from the pulpit, and from the lips of those who never once called the subject in question, never thought of proving the horrible story with which they torment those, whom they ought to instruct in the doctrine of "peace on earth and good will toward men."

But you will say, that, let what will be meant by the end of the world, our text informs us, that at that time, the "angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire." That we may understand what the Saviour meant by the end of the world, and the severing of the wicked from among the just; let us examine his own words on the same subject, recorded in other passages. But let us first remark, that whenever the Redeemer spake of a similar separation of the righteous and the wicked, or of rewarding the one and punishing the other, we should do well to understand him to be speaking of the same event, though his language may somewhat vary.

When he described the end of the world, as we read in the 24th chapter of Matthew, he spake of this same event of a separation which should be made by the angels. See verses 30, 31, "And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great

sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." He then immediately certified his disciples that all these things should take place in that generation. In our labours on this and the following chapter in endeavouring to illustrate the parable of the sheep and the goats, we have shown that what the Saviour meant by the end of the world was the destruction of Jerusalem and the breaking up and dispersion of the nation of the Jews by Titus. The hearer is requested to read the 24th of Matthew with attention, and observe, that when the Saviour speaks of the end, he then says ; " Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains," &c.

What the divine teacher stated in the 24th chapter as the end of the world, and carefully confined the time to that generation, he represented by three parables in the 25th. And it is directly to our purpose to observe, that in these several parables the same thing is very plainly set forth which we find in the text now under consideration. In the first parable the wise and the foolish virgins, mean the same as is meant in our text by the just and the wicked ; in that of the talents, those who improved their Lord's money, and he that neglected so to do, represent the same thing ; and it is worthy of observation, that it is here said, " cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," which agrees with the conclusion of our text ; " There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." So also, in the parable of the sheep and goats, the same distinction is made.

The argument on which we rest this subject is the following : As it is evident, and out of all dispute, that the Saviour confined the end of the world and the separation between the righteous and the wicked to the generation in which he lived, it seems necessary to apply the end of the world, mentioned in our text, to the same period

and event. And we further contend that this application of the end of the world, and of this division of the righteous and the wicked, is abundantly strengthened by the words of the Saviour, recorded in the 16th of Mat., "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." The same ideas are expressed in St. Mark and St. Luke.

In further confirmation of this exposition and application of the end of the world, the hearer is referred to the following words of St. Paul to the Hebrews; "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." 1 Cor. x. 11. "Now all these things, (meaning the destructions of the children of Israel in the wilderness, for their transgressions) happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

As for the common use which is made of those passages which speak of the end of the world, let it be distinctly understood that it is altogether a mistake, as there is not one instance in the whole New-Testament where the end of the world signifies the dissolution of the present order and laws of material nature.

By the end of the world we may understand the end of the Jewish age, and by the severing of the wicked from among the just, we learn the distinction which was made between the enemies and friends of the gospel and the name of Christ, in the day when Jerusalem and the Jews were visited with the desolating judgments, which the Saviour, in a number of instances, denounced upon them.

It now remains that we endeavour to understand

what is meant, in our text, by the furnace of fire, into which it is said the wicked are cast.

This furnace of fire is generally believed to be a state of endless torment in the future existence, where the wicked will be tormented as long as God shall exist. But, my friends, have we any other evidence that this is the true meaning of this scripture, than barely tradition? What reason can there be rendered why this kind of language should mean something different in the New Testament, from what it does in the prophecies of the old? Let us be candid enough on this important subject to look into the scriptures of the prophets for the use of this kind of language. See Duet. iv. 20. Moses in giving special directions to the people against idolatry, turns their attention to the Lord, who had been their deliverer, and says; "But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt." You will notice here, that the affliction and oppression which the Israelites suffered in Egypt, was signified by a furnace. Isaiah xxxi. 9., The Lord's "fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." xlviii. 10., "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Ezekiel xxii. 18—22., "Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yes, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof;

and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you."

Whoever will compare this prophecy with the history of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem will see how well prophecy and events agree.

The hearer is requested to notice that in the language of prophecy, and the scriptures of the Old Testament, great afflictions are represented by the similitude of a furnace. This being understood, why should we use this language differently, when we read it in the New Testament, from what we understand it in the old? Egypt and Jerusalem are denominated a furnace in the passages which we have noticed. Why then must the furnace mentioned in our text be in a future state? Both Egypt and Jerusalem are in this world; and it does not occur to recollection, that any other place is figuratively called a furnace in the whole of the scriptures.

Respecting a furnace, it should be remembered that it is never prepared by our heavenly Father but for the purpose of refining. The tyrant of Egypt did not afflict Israel for the benefit of the afflicted, but "God does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." The King of Babylon once prepared a furnace to burn those to death, who would not worship the image which he had set up, and it seems the common doctrine on the subject of our labours this evening, has prepared a furnace of eternal torment for no better motives than the furnace on the plains of Dura was prepared.

Though we have not time to be particular on all parts of our subject, there is one question which may be proper to consider, before we close. As it seems by our text, that the wicked, who were to be cast into this furnace, were such as had come into the possession of the gospel, this passage does not so naturally apply to the destruction of the Jews, who, generally speaking, rejected even the name of Christ.

Our reply to this we obtain from the words of the Saviour, in Matt. xxiv., where he informs his disciples, that if an evil servant "shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites and unbelievers; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In the preceding chapter, Jesus called the religious people of the Jews hypocrites and a generation of vipers, and denounced on them the judgments written in their law: and here he informed his disciples, that if those who should profess him, should depart from a watchful life and indulge in that which was forbidden, they would have their portion with those hypocrites and unbelievers. The subject now appears clear. The Saviour never indicated that a mere profession of his name would secure men from the judgments which were coming on the land; but such were blessed who heard the word of God and kept it.

We may now conclude, applying our subject to ourselves, as St. Paul has taught us by example, in words which have been noticed. "Now all these things happened unto them for our ensamples; and they are written for our admonition." In all ages of the world God has rewarded men according to their works, he continues to do so, and he will never fail in his faithfulness.

But my friends, we have the consolation to believe that our heavenly Father's mercy extends infinitely beyond all his threatenings, and that though "weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning."

SERMON X.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE SECOND SABBATH IN MARCH, 1820.

EPHESIANS V. 25, 26, 27.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

A VIRTUOUS, fixed, and steady conjugal affection is the same to the sacred family circle, as the sun to a garden of fruits and flowers; for as the genial warmth of the sun quickens and calls forth to life every latent principle of vegetation, presenting the garden in robes of enameled beauty, teeming with ripe and luxuriant fruit, so does the gentle power of conjugal love warm, quicken, and cause to increase all the domestic virtues which are never barren of those fruits which render life and its various cares a blessing. But where this indispensable virtue is wanting, the expectation of sweet content and domestic felicity is as sure to meet with disappointment, as an expectation to find Arabian spices on fields of eternal ice.

The virtuous affection which the apostle here recommends, and which is known to be of such incalculable interest to man in society, is designed to lead our minds to the contemplation of the love of Christ, a subject infinitely greater. To this subject the attention of the hearer is most earnestly invited.

The passage read for consideration seems to suggest the following subjects for examination and illustration.

I. The Church.

II. The love of Christ to the church. And,

III. What the love of Christ to the church induces him to do for it.

As the labours which we propose to bestow on our subject this evening are designed to favour the doctrine of universal, impartial salvation, the hearer is requested to keep a careful watch, with a view to observe how each argument may bear on this great subject. Not only is it of importance that we endeavour to possess ourselves of a knowledge of the evidences on which universality of salvation depends, but it is of equal importance that due attention be paid to understand the nature of this salvation, than which nothing can tend more to remove existing objections from the candid mind. Pious, candid people all fervently desire the salvation of all men ; but not having a clear understanding that the salvation of all stands inseparably connected with the holiness of all, and supposing that those who vindicate universal salvation, do not, at the same time, and to the same end contend for universal righteousness and sanctification, they reject the doctrine as tending to impiety, irreligion, and even to licentiousness. It is confidently believed that a true sense of the passage under consideration will operate favourably in tending to remove all doubts of this nature ; therefore do we the more earnestly recommend a most watchful attention to this subject, and to what we may be enabled to offer upon it. Nor can the reasonable hearer think it strange that we should endeavour to remove the unfavourable views of our fellow citizens from their minds, concerning the doctrine we profess and promulgate, were it only for our own benefit. Universalists have been looked upon and spoken of as a people who have embraced the rankest of all heresies, the most impious tenets, and

as a people destitute of vital religion, and entire strangers, and even enemies to genuine virtue and morality. . On this account, my friends, you will acknowledge that if there ever were a people who had a just reason to call on the candor of the public to hear their defence of their doctrine, and to judge impartially on the subject, such a claim is ours. It is natural, and even laudable to desire the favourable opinion of our fellow creatures, but this should be sought by deserving it. Had we hypocritically secreted our belief for fear of censure, we might have received the approbation we did not deserve, and escaped the bitter reproaches which an honest declaration of our real sentiments has brought upon us. But we have never doubted that time would do us justice, and that better information would efface all the slurs which a want of charity has cast on our name.

Respecting the church the following particulars may be distinctly noticed.

1. That mankind was the church of Christ before he gave himself for the church.

2. That all men belong to this church, and

3. The moral state which the church was in, when Christ loved it and gave himself for it.

On carefully examining our text we shall easily discover the truth concerning the three particulars here suggested.

First. Christ could not have loved the church until he had one, nor could he give himself for his church until he had one. But our text says; "Even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Thus it is evident that mankind was the church of Christ before he gave himself for the church.

Secondly. That all men belong to the church of Christ is proved from two arguments furnished in our text, in connexion with other scripture testimony. First, it is indicated in our text that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; and the same apostle is particular in stating that Christ

gave himself a ransom for all men. These two ideas, when brought together, amount to our proposition. If Christ gave himself a ransom for all, and if those for whom he gave himself are his church, then it follows that all men are of his church.

The second argument which our text furnishes, in support of the proposition that all men are of the church of Christ, involves the very objection which an opposer would not fail to urge. We mean the moral condition or state of mankind set forth in our text. The common opinion of our divines supposes that no one can belong to the church of Christ until by sanctification, effectual calling, regeneration or the new birth, the subject becomes united to Christ. But this opinion is by our text disallowed; for it informs us, that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. Now that which is already clean needs no cleansing, and that which is holy needs not to be sanctified. It is here evident that our text speaks of the church in a state of uncleanness and unholiness, in which state Christ loved it.

Though this argument may appear novel, yet its validity cannot be denied; for if Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, the unsanctified, unclean state of man is proof that he is the subject of the divine favour. And when we unite with this consideration the fact that Christ gave himself a ransom for all men, our evidence is complete, and our proposition supported.

In further confirmation of the foregoing arguments, reference may be had to emblems used in scripture which regard the cleansing of mankind from moral defilement, and also to those passages which call on sinners to repent and turn from the evil of their ways. If the scriptures represent the Saviour as a refiner's fire and as a fuller's soap, they also represent the subjects of his grace as

unrefined and unclean. And if the scriptures call on men to repent of their sins, to do justice and to love mercy, it is because they are in a sinful state.

It is of importance that the hearer should understand, that while our remarks go to prove that men are unclean, unholy, and sinful, they are thereby rendered effectual in proving that they belong to the church of Christ. Nor can we conceive of any possible way to avoid our proposition of universality as long as the command to repent is acknowledged to be universal.

As our text asserts that Christ gave himself for the church, the universality of the church seems evidently proved by the testimony which informs us that Christ gave himself a ransom for all men. Such, therefore, is the importance of such testimony in the case under consideration, that we may be justified in referring to a competent number of passages which prove this point of doctrine.

The prophet Isaiah in his 53d chapter says: "All we, like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Heb. ii. 9. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 John ii. 1, 2, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Here, *all men, every man, and the whole world*, are said to be the subjects of this grace of the Saviour. Will candid hearers say that this is not directly to the subject? Will they contend that the evidence is not altogether sufficient? What would an hon-

est Methodist say to a Calvinist, who should contend that Jesus Christ gave himself for none but such as believe in Calvinistic doctrine? Would he not very justly reply, and say, then the whole world believe in Calvinistic doctrine, for the scriptures maintain that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, that he tasted death for every man, and gave himself a ransom for all men; but they no where inform us that he gave himself for a Calvinist, or for any other particular denomination?

My friends, if there were even an appearance of any other sentiment in the scriptures, on this subject, the case would be very different from what it now is. But there is no intimation in the word of truth which gives the least authority for limiting the grace, which is the subject of our present inquiry.

You will recollect that Christ did not give himself a ransom for all men in order to make them his church, but because they were his church, and because he loved his church, and that he might sanctify and cleanse his church from all uncleanness, and from all unholiness.

The hearer is now reminded of what we requested in the introduction of these arguments, namely, that a strict attention should be given to ascertain how the arguments should tend to the support of universalism, and to illustrate the nature of salvation. If you have duly complied with this request it may be well to make up an opinion on the subject, as far as the arguments go, to which we have attended. The amount of these arguments seem to be this—All mankind are found to be in a state of sin, Christ gave himself for all, because all belonged to his church, and he gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it from all sin. If you view these points in any good measure supported, of course you must acknowledge that universal salvation is thus supported; and you must also be satisfied that the holiness of

all men is embraced as their salvation, which will tend to do away the objection that this doctrine tends to impiety and irreligion.

Our next labours, according to promise, will be directed to set forth, in its true character, the love of Christ to the church.

That this subject may the more clearly be seen, let us ask the question, why did Christ love the church? Answer negatively; not because of its moral holiness, righteousness and perfection, for these were wanting. If the church had been morally clean, Christ would not have given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it. Our minds are therefore directed to the consideration of the divine testimony which so fully represents the love of God to sinners. St. Paul, in the 5th of Romans reasons as follows; "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." On this passage let us remark; it was the ungodly for whom Christ died, it was the ungodly whom God loved, and the death of Christ was designed to commend that love to the ungodly. My friends, did you ever hear a Universalist preacher express his sentiments more clearly or more boldly than they are set forth in this truly wonderful passage? If it were possible to make the accusation of licentiousness lie against us for preaching the love of God to sinners, is it not plain that the whole force of the accusation must fall on the testimony last quoted? If God can, consistently, love the ungodly, if Christ could die for the ungodly, and that in order to commend the love of God to the ungodly, what could a Universalist say more? Was there even one who did say more? or was there even one that could think beyond this declaration of St. Paul?

To the Ephesians, the same apostle speaks of the great love wherewith God loved them, even when they were dead in sin. And the beloved John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." These passages are designed to set forth the great and glorious truth that the death of Christ was the consequence of the divine love to sinners, which corroborates the words of our text; "even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." This important subject being clear, let us still continue the question, why Christ loved the church? It has been proved that he loved the church, and it has likewise been proved that he did not love it because it was of a holy character, it being in a sinful state. It remains therefore, that we endeavour to understand the true reason why he loved it. This answer is easily found. It is found in the righteousness of God. God is love, and love is righteousness. Hatred is the opposite of God, and is sinful. It is no more in the nature of God to hate than to sin, which is impossible. The divine love is towards all creatures. The "Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." This is perfect and infinite righteousness. This love of God was commended to us in that Christ died for the ungodly. Christ is the righteousness of God to us. And in order to be so, he must love us, for love is righteousness. All the reason that we are not righteous is because we do not love as God does. "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law."

The answer of this question is found also in the emblems which the scripture uses to represent our relation to Christ. St. Paul says to the Corinthians; "I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." In this constitutional union we learn the reason why Christ loves mankind; for "we are members of his

body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The apostle says; "No man even yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cheriseth it, even as the Lord the church." And in this connexion he signifies that Christ must love his church, or be at variance with himself. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Again, the apostle says; "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church." What emblem could the apostle have chosen in all nature which could carry the mind more directly to the original law of moral nature, or with greater force impress it with a sense of the constitutional love of Christ to mankind? The sweet and endearing relations of father, and of mother, cords of pure silver set with innumerable precious jewels, are passed by, in the choice of this figure, and the sacred arcanum of sexual relation judiciously chosen, to represent a relation and connexion, in which Christ and we are one. It was God who "said, it is not good that man should be alone;" it was God who constituted the man the head of the woman; and Christ the head of every man.

In view of these reasons why Christ loves the church, it is clearly understood that all those things which are so much relied on, among professors generally, such as repentance, faith, good works, regeneration, as necessary to secure the love of Christ, are entirely out of the question. Not because they are unnecessary things; but because they are all the fruits and effects of the love of Christ, and therefore not the causes of that love. Our lovely children, who appear like olive plants around our tables, are the fruits of conjugal love, not the cause of the connexion from which they sprang. So are repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; a new heart, and all the virtues which adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, the fruits of the divine love, according to the

holy dictates of which Christ gave himself for the church.

Having taken this view of the love of Christ to mankind, the hearer may proceed to make some calculation, as to the tendency of the arguments in support of universal salvation, and also their testimony concerning the nature of the salvation which divine love has designed for the human family. As it is clear to every candid mind, that there is no partiality in the love of God towards sinners, so it is equally clear, that if that love has designed and secured the salvation of one sinner, it has equally designed and secured the salvation of the whole world. And as it is evident that this love of God, which is the foundation of man's salvation, is the eternal law of holiness and the very perfection of righteousness, so the salvation which it designs for man, is a salvation from sin, and all moral uncleanness, to sanctity and holiness. This, my friends, is a subject, which we are the most desirous that you should understand both for the purpose of endearing the truth to your hearts, and of removing the accusation of licentiousness, which is so constantly urged against the doctrine of universal salvation. But arguments more directly to this purpose will be employed in setting forth what was promised under our last head of doctrine, which is to show what the love of Christ to the church induces him to do for it.

We have already hinted at some of the particulars of this subject. It has been noticed that Christ gave himself for the church because he loved it, and it is worthy of remark that the true character of the lawful husband is indicated in this particular. It is true, to our imperfection and disgrace be it mentioned, that an unlawful connexion may by other means be effected, but the honest, the virtuous man obtains the companion of his heart by giving himself as the just and true value of what he receives. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. If the church had been worth

less, it would have been unworthy of him ; and if unworthy of him, surely would it have been unworthy of his love. But blessed be God, Christ loved the church, he knew its worth, and he gave himself for it ; it was all he could give, it was all there was to give, for in him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell.

It is said in our text, that Christ gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

Here are three important truths evidently embraced in this part of our text, which it may be necessary to notice.

1. The sin and uncleanness of mankind have not destroyed the value of the moral workmanship of God, which may be cleansed and be as holy and as glorious as in its created state.

2. The word of divine truth, revealed in the gospel, is represented by water designed for this work of cleansing men from sin ; and,

3. It is indicated in our text, that Christ has determined to present his church to himself free from spot or wrinkle, a glorious church.

If, according to common opinion, sin had changed the nature of man, and rendered him totally depraved, entirely destitute of the moral image in which he was created, then would there have been nothing for Christ to love, unless he could love sin, which none will allow ; nor would there have been any thing to sanctify and cleanse, unless sin and uncleanness can be made holy, which is impossible.

The fact is, sin is represented as a spot, which adheres to a garment, and defaces its beauty. And as such stains may be taken out of the cloth, so we are taught that sin may be washed away, as we learn from the following ascription ; "To him

that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

In our Saviour's prayer, he says to his Father, "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." So the apostle in our text says; "that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word." The words blood, truth, and word, are used to signify that pure doctrine of the gospel which cleanses men from all sin. This is that clean water of which we read, Ezekiel xxxv. 26, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." This is that fountain of which we read, Zachariah xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Of the use of this water we read, Isaiah i. 16, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." And that the deepest stain of sin may, by such means, be removed, the prophet signifies as follows; "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

A hope is entertained, that we shall give no offence by saying, what is so evidently true, that the natural effects of the use of clean water on that which is filthy, is to cleanse it, and make it clean like itself; but if the water be filthy it will render every thing on which it is used, like itself. Leaving the figure, what shall we say of the various partial doctrines of the christian church since the corruptions of christianity were introduced? They have maintained the doctrine of partial election and reprobation, of total depravity by imputation, of vindictive wrath and eternal vengeance in God, of endless sin and rebellion, of rendering saints happy in heaven by tormenting their fellow creatures in hell, and a thousand other absurd things;

and what have these doctrines done towards cleansing, and sanctifying believers in them? My friends, it is too evident that these unclean waters have rendered those who have used them like themselves, to which the history of the church will bear ample testimony. But the pure doctrine of divine love, grace, pardon, and forgiveness, is of a cleansing quality. It extracts the poison of hatred, kills the monster jealousy, drowns envy, molifies the hard heart, creates a forgiving spirit, and draws out the affections in love to enemies. This doctrine so much despised, so much censured, is designed to take out every spot and every wrinkle from the church of Christ, and "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Then shall the church be glorious in the Lord her righteousness. To this end Christ is "made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." When all men are rendered wise in the wisdom of Christ, righteous in the righteousness of Christ, sanctified in the sanctity of Christ, and are completely redeemed from sin, from death, and from mortality, when that which was sown in dishonour shall be raised in glory, and this mortal body is fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, then will the church appear in all the splendor of immortal beauty and glory. To this immensely glorious subject, we may accommodate the words of the sweet singer of Israel; "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work."

My respected hearers, be so good as not to forget our particular request, that you would endeavour to understand the tendency of our arguments to substantiate the doctrine of impartial goodness and salvation, and likewise the nature of this salvation, that you may be able to form a correct opinion concerning these weighty subjects, and to do the doctrine for which we have contended that justice which charity dictates.

To conclude ; although we have only used the virtuous affections of conjugal love as a metaphor to represent the love of Christ to mankind, a hope is entertained that a due consideration of the nature of the figure may contribute to incite every husband to the discharge of obligations so sacred as those which are due to the wife. And we may add, in the language of the apostle, " Let the wife see that she reverence her husband."

SERMON XI.

DIVINE TRUTH AS REPRESENTED BY TITHES.

DELIVERED IN ROXBURY, JANUARY 4, 1821.

MALACHI III. 10.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

AMONG the various rites of the legal covenant, all which were designed to signify the inward and moral virtues which God requires, and that spiritual worship, which the more glorious ministration of righteousness enables its enlightened votaries to offer to the invisible fountain of all good, that of tithes held no inconsiderable rank. Long before the giving of the law by Moses, this indication of piety and devotion was practised by the true worshippers of God, as may be seen in the account given in Gen. xiv. of Abram's paying tithes to Melchizedek, priest of the most high God; and we likewise have in this account a clear intimation, that these tithes were an acknowledgment of blessings received: for we read that Melchizedek blessed Abram, in the name of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. This indication of piety was imitated by Jacob, the grandson of Abram, as we read in Gen. xxviii. 20, 21, 22, "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I

come again to my father's house, in peace, then shall the Lord be my God ; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house : and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." It is necessary that we observe here, that Jacob expected to receive the whole from God, the tenth of which he solemnly vowed he would give to the giver. It was such, therefore, as God gave to Jacob, that Jacob promised to give to the Lord, his God.

In the law given by Moses, we find the following recorded in the 14th of Deuteronomy : "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks ; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it ; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee ; then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose ; and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth ; and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thine household."

In the doctrine of tithes, as seen in the passages quoted, it seems necessary to notice the following particulars : 1st. All tithes were of what God in his gracious providence first bestowed on the people. 2d. They were an acknowledgment of the divine favour. 3d. They were eaten in the place which God chose, in which to establish his name and worship, by those who offered them, together with their households, with rejoicing.

These offerings, which God required of his chosen people, constituted the meat of his house, and were emblematical of those provisions of a spiritual nature, provided for all people in the gospel of divine favour. They figured forth, in a most striking manner, the doctrine of grace of which Jesus spake, as recorded in the 6th of John, where he says; "I am the bread of life. This is that bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." All this, the Saviour explains in the following words; "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." That is, the doctrine which Jesus preached is the soul's spiritual meat; it is eternal life; it is the life of the world.

As the tithes under the law, which were brought into the house of the Lord, and there eaten before the Lord, were the natural life of those who ate them, as they constituted their flesh and blood, and were the aliment necessary to their support, they were bright emblems of those moral and divine principles revealed through the Saviour, which constitute the spiritual life of the soul, and are the necessary aliment by which it is quickened, and by which it lives. And as those tithes were brought into the house of the Lord, where God chose to put his name, it shows us that nothing but the living bread of life, the pure doctrine of eternal life should ever be brought into our christian worship, or into the house of prayer, which is dedicated to the name of the living God. And as those tithes were eaten in the house of the Lord, by those who offered them, and by their families, we are instruct

ed, that in our christian devotion we are to offer no principles, no doctrine, no sentiments which we cannot feed upon ourselves, or on which our households cannot feed and be nourished. And furthermore, as those tithes were to be eaten with rejoicing, we are reminded that no doctrine which issues in mourning and sorrow, should ever defile the house dedicated to christian devotion.

Preceding our text, God complains of the house of Israel, as follows ; "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." But we are not to conclude that there were no offerings; for this prophet in chapter 1st, accuses the priests of offering polluted bread, of offering the blind, the lame, and the sick; and says to them; "offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."

My brethren, as the priests under the legal dispensation robbed God, by withholding the tithes and offerings which were required; and as they polluted his altars with meat which was unsavory, so the priesthood under the gospel dispensation, have robbed God of those spiritual tithes and offerings which the law of Christ requires, and they have polluted the table of the christian sanctuary with unwholesome meat; such as they cannot eat themselves, such as no one can eat with rejoicing, and such, of which if a man eat he must die. Therefore, in our future inquiries on this subject, on this interesting occasion, we shall,

1st. Examine the meat which has been offered in the sanctuary of christian devotion, and endeavour to show that, in some instances at least, it is not the true spiritual tithes which Christ requires.

2. We shall attempt to bring forward the true and living bread, that there may be meat in the house of the Lord, and give some true tokens that

we are not deceived in the bread which we place on the table of the Lord. And,

3. By proving God herewith we shall, if we make no mistake, see the windows of heaven open, and a blessing poured out until there be not room enough to receive it.

By proposing this method your humble servant would, by no means, wish to indicate a satisfaction in finding fault with the religious sentiments, which have been long venerated in the christian church, farless in pursuing the inquiry would he manifest an invidious spirit towards those whom he may view to be in error. The devout and fervent desires of his soul are, faithfully to pursue the path pointed out by the great apostle and high priest of the christian dispensation, and cautiously to keep his feet in the bright and shining way, in which the captain of our salvation walked in the days of his flesh. It was not because the blessed Saviour took a pleasure in exposing the errors of the superstitious scribes, pharisees, and doctors, that he so faithfully pointed them out to the people, but like a faithful and skilful surgeon, who probes the rankled wound, he directed his quick and powerful word in a way to search the most covered recesses of the heart, that the cure might be effectual, and place the patient beyond the reach of danger. With feelings then of the warmest charity towards all men, let us, without the least hesitation, enter the sanctuary of christian devotion, let us inspect with a holy jealousy, the corn, the oil, and the wine which our doctors of divinity have placed on the table of the Lord, and if the unclean be found there, though the hand of a father, or a brother have thus polluted the altar of our God, or although we ourselves have brought the vain oblation, let us in the name and spirit of Christ purge our Father's house.

That religious sentiment which represents that an unalterable decree existed in the mind of the divine Being, from all eternity, pursuant to which

a large portion of the human family were doomed to endless misery, even before creation, is the first Particular which is proposed for examination. It is not necessary to state this article in the words in which it stands in the creed of the church, nor is it expedient to notice any of the methods by which it has been defined or defended; it being a fact of general notoriety, that this sentiment is an essential article of the christian faith and doctrine, according to what has for ages been esteemed sound orthodoxy; it belongs to our present inquiry to examine it in relation to any divine evidence by which it is supported. Or to indulge in the figurative language of our text, we may ask what this sentiment is the tithe of.

The hearer will carefully recollect that God required no tithes but of the blessings and bounties of his providence, with which he had enriched his people. When the tithe of corn, oil, or wine was brought into the house of God, it was there presented before the Lord as a perfect, a fair sample of what God in his divine goodness had bestowed. The question now before us is, what has our heavenly Father bestowed on our christian clergy and doctors, the tithes of which is this doctrine of partial election to everlasting life, and the reprobation of countless millions to a state of endless woe? The fruits of the spiritual land of promise are enumerated by a faithful scribe, and are the following: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." If we truly tithe these heavenly fruits shall we find this doctrine of election, which we have described? Let us begin with love. But caution is here necessary. Does the gospel of Christ require that we love all men, or only a part? Answer, "It hath been said unto you, by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, pray for them that hate you, and do good to them that persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is

in heaven ; who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain upon the just and upon the unjust." Here carefully observe that the Saviour requires the tithe of that same love which our heavenly Father has bestowed on us, and does most impartially exercise towards all men. If we could ask every individual who loves all men, whether that love which exercises his affections dictates a single desire for the endless misery of any of the human family, is there one who would answer in the affirmative ? Is there a real Christian on earth or in heaven, who can say, that the love of God constrains him to choose some of Adam's posterity to enjoy with him, his Saviour, his heaven and his God, and others to welter in torment world without end ?

No, my Christian friends, there is not such a Christian in the world. Therefore this sentiment now under examination is not the tithe of the fruit of the love of God.

In the next place we may examine the inestimable fruit of the spirit, which the apostle places next to that of love. This is joy. Will any, whose heart has been made to rejoice in God, and to joy in the God of their salvation say, that they rejoice in the belief that millions of their fellow creatures are doomed to everlasting torment beyond the shades of mortality ? Remember, it was strictly required under the law, and the law was a shadow of good things to come, that the tithes should be eaten with rejoicing. But has this doctrine, under examination, ever been feasted on with joy and gladness ? Would it not be mockery worse than the captive sons of Israel endured, when by the dark waters of Babylon, their enemies asked of them the mirthful songs of Zion, to insist that Christian people should rejoice in the doctrine of endless torment ?

Look ye, my dear friends, contemplate parents and children in the house of the Lord, eating the tithe-offering and all rejoicing together in the good-

ness of the giver of every good and every perfect gift, and then turn your thoughts to a disconsolate family in the house of Christian devotion. The father, the mother, the children seated comfortably together, O the lovely sight ! but what do they hear from the desk ? Some are elected of God to enjoy him for ever ; for them he has laid up his stores of mercy ; but the rest of mankind are reprobated to inconceivable misery for ever. Parents must be for ever separated from their children, companions from each other, and children of the same family must bid each other an eternal farewell.

Now behold the gloom, now see the tears of grief, now see this family looking one upon another, while their faces gather paleness. Is this the meat which God requires us to put on his table ? Is this the bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world ? No, surely the fruit of joy is far from affording such tithes as these.

Time will not admit, nor is it necessary to examine all the beforementioned fruits of the spirit, and to compare them with this doctrine of partial election ; for if the two first are directly opposed to this doctrine, the remainder cannot agree with it. However, we may notice the third, which is peace. Then let us ask whether this doctrine is productive of divine peace in the soul ? The apostle says, " there is peace in believing and there is joy in the Holy Ghost." But do we hear those, who endeavour to support this doctrine, attempt to persuade its votaries, that to believe that their dearest friends, and perhaps themselves are heirs of endless wrath by the inexorable decree of the Father of our spirits, will give them peace ? By no means. In fact they all endeavour to leave this part of their doctrine for somebody else. But be it remembered that he who brings the tithes must eat of them himself, and rejoice before the Lord. Let our dear friends, our clergy, our doctors of divinity, who bring this

doctrine into the house of God, and place it on the table of the Lord, come forward and declare that they take this doctrine to themselves, and rejoice that their heavenly Father's decree has appointed them to endless woe. But they will not eat this meat. Then let it be taken away; if it be not fit for them it is not fit for others, and certainly it is not fit to offer unto God.

Says the prophet; "offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?" If our preachers should give our governor such a character as they attribute to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and persuade the people to believe that he has laid a scheme which he intends shall issue in the greatest possible happiness of a few of our citizens, but in the destruction of the greatest part of our community, would he be pleased with them? Would he accept their persons? Would he esteem them for the honour they had attributed to him? My friends, that crown of thorns which wicked hands placed on the sacred head of the Son of God, was a garland of flowers, a festoon of roses compared with this.

When this inquiry was commenced, it was the intention of the speaker to extend it to a number of particulars, but this would devote too much of our time to the least agreeable part of our general subject. But if the hearer will cautiously remember, that no doctrine which does not flow naturally from the divine favour, can be admitted as wholesome and worthy of a place on the table of the Lord, he will be ever able to examine and determine any particular tenet of doctrine, whether it be the bread of life, or that which pollutes the sanctuary.

1. We shall now attempt to bring forward the true and living bread, that there may be meat in the house of the Lord; and to give some true tokens that we are not deceived in the bread which we place on the table of the Lord. And while doing this we may find it convenient to ex-

pose the pollution of some more of the provisions which have heretofore polluted this holy table.

The first portion of meat which the high priest of the Christian sanctuary and house of God presents us is the love of our heavenly Father. Love, we have noticed is the first of the fruits of the spirit. This should always appear on the table of the Lord. God is love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. This, my brethren, is the true, genuine bread of eternal life. Of this a man may eat and never die.

This plain doctrine of the love of God to the world shows the pollution of that doctrine which represents our Father in heaven to be an enemy to sinners. The popular doctrine of our clergy has for ages taught, that God was such an enemy to sinful man, that Jesus was under the necessity of appeasing his wrath with his own blood. People have been exhorted to seek a covering in Jesus from the vengeance of the everlasting Father of our spirits. All such doctrine is polluted bread, it is dishonourable to God, it is unwholesome food, no man can feed on it with rejoicing.

It is of moment that we duly consider that Jesus, our great High Priest, never presented such bread as this on his Father's table. He never once in the days of his flesh intimated that our heavenly Father was our enemy, or that he had come to suffer and die to appease his wrath. But he constantly inculcated the belief that God, his Father, and our Father was good to sinners, and delighted in their repentance and in forgiving them freely all trespasses.

2. As a doctrine standing in due connection with this everlasting love of God to the world of mankind, the great High Priest set forth the necessity of repentance towards God and faith and good,

dence in his mercy. In the doctrine of Jesus it is seen that the goodness of God leads sinners to repentance; and this discovers the pollution occasioned by that doctrine which has led us to believe, that our repentance was necessary to render our heavenly Father friendly to us. This polluted meat has been uniformly set on the table of the Lord, by our Christian clergy, and has produced a worship that has exceeded in its horrors, the miserable idolatry of the priests of Baal, who cut themselves and cried from morning until night that they might move the compassion of their deity.

The doctrine of repentance and reformation is most beautifully set forth in the Saviour's parable of the prodigal; where there is no intimation of an angry father, who demanded some sacrifice to appease his wrath, which burned towards his son; but a father full of compassion, ready to forgive and to bestow more than the son could think or ask. This, my friends, is heavenly bread; it is a perfect sample of what we derive from the giver of every blessing. This doctrine of repentance, and confidence in God, should never be wanting in the house of the Lord. It is needed at all times, and should be set forth for all to partake, for all to eat of it with rejoicing. The way in which the wisdom of this world has set forth the doctrine of repentance, not only defiles the name of the Lord by efforts to reconcile him, but it pollutes the sanctuary with its partiality; for it is never presented for all. The preacher thinks he has no need to eat of this; he thinks likewise that his church have no need to partake of this, but he sets it forth for those who have not subscribed to his creed nor owned his covenant. Such are called on to repent. But as it was under the law, those who brought the tithes ate of themselves, and gave also to their households, and all ate and rejoiced together, so let the ministers of the spiritual sanctuary and house of God eat of this heav

only meat and give it to all the congregation, and let them all partake of this provision together, and rejoice in their God, and joy in the goodness of our heavenly Father, who, with open arms is ready to embrace his children, to clothe them in the best robe, to grace them with his ring of love, and to welcome them as sons and daughters to his table.

Did those who once brought their tithes and ate them in the house of the Lord, think that there was no need of repeating this requirement? But our Christian people who are professors of religion, generally think, that as they once repented of sin, when repentance is preached it is meant for some body else, not for them. Thus the table of the Lord is become contemptible.

3. The great and momentous doctrine of man's constitutional sonship and heirship in the God of heaven and earth, is set forth as the bread of life, in the testimony of the captain of our salvation. He took little children in his arms and said, of such is the kingdom of heaven. This shows us at once that the common doctrine, which has taught us that we were all born into the world heirs of wrath and children of the devil, under God's wrath and curse, and liable to the pains of hell for ever, is most polluted, most profane bread. God graciously grant that his table in this house may never be polluted and rendered contemptible with such meat. Is such doctrine the true, and genuine tithes of the blessings of the great possessor of heaven and earth? Can such bread be eaten with joy? My dear brethren, can you take your families and bring them to this house and here together with them, hear it proclaimed, that we were all born into the world totally depraved, and under the sentence of eternal death and rejoice in this testimony with your companions and children? No, surely this is polluted bread.

But with what sweet delight, with what rational rejoicing can you come with your households,

seat yourselves in this house, which you this day dedicate to the Father of mercies, to Jesus, the great high priest of our profession, and to the doctrine of his grace, and attend to the divine testimony, that we were all created, and brought into being, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. On this doctrine you can all feed and be nourished therewith, of this you can all partake with rejoicing. And this is the true token that the bread is acceptable unto God. A parent delights to feed the child with that which gives it pleasure and comfort. And so we have seen that it was commanded, in the shadow of these good things; nothing was to be eaten as tithes before the Lord, but such as the soul desired, and of which they could eat and rejoice.

4. The doctrine of immortality and eternal life is brought to light through the gospel, and is the true bread of God, and is that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. This doctrine is the true tithe of the resurrection of Jesus; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. The house of the Lord should never be destitute of this meat, it should always be found on his table. Jesus said; "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." St. Paul says; "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." This doctrine proves that the opinion, that in a future state, there will be a separation made, and some of the human family received to favour and happiness, while the rest are to be banished to a state of wretchedness is polluted bread. We have no intimation in the sacred word, from which we collect all the tithes for the house of the Lord, that Jesus, our forerunner, has brought a future state of sin and misery to light through the gospel.

Who can calculate the sorrows which have wrung the hearts of thousands, in consequence of their believing in this separation of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of brothers and sis-

ters in the future state. What lamentations, what darkness, what despair have filled the house of the Lord, where this doctrine has been successfully inculcated. That this is polluted bread is evident, for no one can eat it with rejoicing. Even those who profess it, and who are careful to place themselves in the most favoured condition, have continual sorrow of heart, for fear some dear companion, some affectionate parent, some lovely child, some beloved brother, sister or dear friend, may be torn away by the merciless hand of divine vengeance, and plunged into a burning lake. But the true doctrine of eternal life, of immortality and glory, completes the heavenly banquet, and is a source of the most rational rejoicing that was ever contemplated by the human mind. But if we carry sin and misery into the resurrection state, we pollute the bread of life, and convert the ministration of righteousness into death.

Surely there can be no lovelier sight on earth, than a congregation assembled, composed of whole families, in a convenient house, dedicated to the pure, unsullied doctrine of godliness, and there exercising themselves in supplication and thanksgiving; in contemplating the goodness of God and celebrating his praise; and above all in anticipating an eternal sabbath of holiness and happiness beyond the Jordan of death.

Such doctrine is certainly the most desirable meat which can be offered in the house of God, to his honour, or for the comfort and happiness of his people. And it is worthy of remark that even the opposers of this doctrine acknowledge that it is the desire of their hearts; it is what they fervently and most devoutly pray for, but they fear that it is too good to be true. But let it be remembered, that those who ate tithes in the house of the Lord, were strictly commanded to eat whatsoever their soul desired.

5. Let us now bring all these tithes into the house of the Lord, that there may be meat in his

house ; and let us prove God herewith, and see if he will not open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing, until there be not room enough to receive it.

Although we have restricted ourselves to only four particulars out of an innumerable multitude, care has been taken to select those, which when connected, necessarily involve all others which belong to the table of the Lord ; and necessarily exclude all polluted bread, which has been invented by the partial wisdom of this world.

In the combination of the fulness of our heavenly Father's love to the whole family of man, and the influence of the same to lead sinners to repentance, and to a settled confidence in the divine favour, with the assurance that mankind was constituted the heirs of eternal life in Jesus, and the hope, brought to light through him of life and immortality, we find necessarily comprehended every grace and every virtue which is not here particularly enumerated.

With these clear and luminous sentiments in our minds, and while feasting on them with rejoicing, do we not perceive that the windows of heaven, by which we may understand the promises of God in covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; the testimony of all God's holy prophets since the world began ; who have testified the restitution of all things, corresponding with the covenant of promise, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed ; the doctrine of Jesus and the following testimony of his inspired apostles ; I say, do we not see that these windows are open on this meat which we have brought into the house of the Lord ? And from these windows do we not behold the light and evidence of our doctrine ? and do we not discover that a plenitude of blessing flows through them, even beyond the reach of the powers of our minds ?

As a sample of the whole, let us notice the following ; " In thee and in thy seed shall all na-

tions be blessed. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord ; and shall glorify thy name. In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things ; of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow ; of wines on the lees well refined : and in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts destroy the face of the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations ; he will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth : for the Lord hath spoken it. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. And him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. For as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. For it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them,

heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever."

This doctrine is that river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God ; it is that pure river of the water of life, that proceeds from the throne of God and the lamb. In the midst of the street of it and on either side is the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

That there is an abundance of this grace, even beyond the extent of our wants, is evident not only from the apostle's declaration, that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, but also from all the emblems which the holy spirit of prophecy has used to represent it.

Moses says ; my doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew : as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. These emblems extend the divine favour without measure. Isaac represents the Saviour by the emblem of light, rising and shining on the Gentile world, effecting salvation to the ends of the earth. Ezekiel travelled in the holy waters of this grace, until he says they were risen waters, waters to swim in, a river that no man can pass. Jesus said ; The water that I will give, shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life. And in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst let him come to me and drink.

My friends, the grace of God is as free and as abundant as the light of the sun, as the rain from heaven, as wells and rivers of water.

Brethren, may it please an indulgent God, to reward all your labours, your highly honourable exertions, and your commendable perseverance, from the commencement of the gathering of your society in this place, to the completion of this beautiful house, and to its present dedication to

the worship of the one true and living God, with an abundance of those spiritual provisions with which Sion is blessed. And may the divine glory abide in this house ; may there be wholesome meat on the table of the Lord in this place continually, for you and for your children for a long time to come. And may it also please God to continue your happy union, and your good agreement and friendly intercourse with the other Christian societies in this place.

SERMON XII.

THE GOLDEN CALF.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE FOURTH SABBATH IN FEB. 1821.

EXODUS XXXII. 35.

"And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf which Aaron made."

WHEN Moses, the Jewish law-giver, was called into Mount Horeb, or Sinai, to receive the tables of the law from the hand of the Lord, he was absent from the congregation so long as to render the people uneasy. The people, therefore, came to Aaron the priest, and said, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Aaron, it seems, was like many modern priests, very much disposed to please the people, whether he pleased God, or not. "And Aaron said unto them, break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand; and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; and they said, these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, to-morrow is a feast to the Lord. And they rose up

early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

"The hearer will be careful to keep in mind this account of the making of the calf; for we shall find that Aaron gave a very different representation to Moses afterwards, when he found that Moses' wrath was hot against him for this wickedness. The Lord informed Moses in the mount, of the idolatry of the people; and sent him down immediately. "And Moses said unto Aaron, what did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." You perceive here, that Aaron gives no intimation that he had any hand in forming this image; but endeavours, with all craftiness, to exonerate himself from any blame. In the first place, he referred Moses to what he himself knew of the people; that they were set on mischief. This answered as an excuse for his complying with their demand. This is the way that priestcraft excuses itself in our day. If preachers are asked why they preach such absurdities, such nonsense, doctrines not taught in the scriptures, doctrines which are dishonourable to both God and man—they refer to the wickedness of the people; and say that nothing else will suit them or their circumstances. The real fact is, they are afraid if they do not continue in the traditions in which they have been educated, they will be discontinued in their professional labours. Aaron, no doubt, was afraid of losing his office, if he did not please the people: he therefore made

it his study to do it. He furthermore said to Moses, "then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Here was an evident design to deceive Moses, and make him think that a miracle had been wrought to produce this image; for how could it happen that gold ear-rings cast into the fire, should come out in the shape of a calf, if some invisible power had not given it form? And surely if a miracle had produced this image, the people might be justified in paying it divine honours; and Aaron was by no means censurable for what an invisible power had effected.

By referring to history, we may be satisfied respecting the way in which this image of a calf became the idol of these Israelites. Diodorus Siculus mentions Remphis, a king of Egypt, about the time that Jacob went down there; and says of him, that he gathered an infinite mass of wealth; and left behind him at his death, four million talents; which makes it probable that he was the prince, which in the famine, by the advice of Joseph, got all the wealth of Egypt, and of the neighbouring countries into his hands. This person was afterwards worshipped as a god, for having saved his country in time of famine; and was accordingly placed among the stars. This star, it seems, was Saturn; for in an old Egyptian alphabet, Saturn is called Reephan. St. Stephen, in the 7th of Acts, assists us in this inquiry. He says, alluding to this image—"And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol; and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the *star* of your god *Remphan*; figures which ye made to worship them." Concerning this Prince of Egypt, there is a tradition in Suidas, (which the author whom I consult says is) very intelligible. This tradition says of *Apis*, the Egyptian god, that he was a certain rich man, to whom, at his death, they erected a temple; in which an ox was fed, as being the hieroglyphic of an husbandman. By which, it appears,

that this was the calf or bullock worshipped by the Israelites. Saturn being among the gentiles president of husbandry ; and therefore, sometimes worshipped in the shape of that animal, under the name of *Apis*. There is reference to this ox in the 106th Psalm, as follows : "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass."

By these references to history, both sacred and profane, we are led to suppose, that this image was worshipped in Egypt for nearly four hundred years before the Israelites went out of that country. These Israelites had, no doubt, imbibed many superstitions which were incorporated into the Egyptian worship ; and a veneration for this idol among the rest.

When, therefore, the people demanded of Aaron to make them gods to go before them, he well knew the form of the image which would best suit their superstition, and accordingly shaped the similitude of an ox.

Our text informs us, that " the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf which Aaron made." We are not to suppose that the divine ruler of the universe becomes inimical towards his creatures, because of their foolish idolatry ; but it is the established law of nature, that consequences must follow their causes. If people worship a Deity, who is able to protect them, who is, of his own accord, willing to do all for them which they need, they have then no trouble, are at no expense to do for their Deity ; but they have rest and confidence. But if they worship a god of their own imaginations, one formed according to superstition, they must stand in awe and fear of him, according to the attributes which they give him. They must do for him, for he cannot do for them. The true God takes care of, and provides for his people ; but the people must take care of, and provide for a false god. In this way, all false

worship, and all false doctrines and religions, tend to plague their votaries, and bring them into torment. In this way likewise, all manner of wickedness operates to the disadvantage of transgressors, naturally tending to render them unblessed and miserable.

We shall now proceed to apply the subject of our text to represent the false religion of our own times; and the craft of a priesthood by which the people are led into error. As the children of Israel were brought up and educated in Egypt, and as they had in their youth imbibed many superstitions, they were prepared to be imposed upon, even by their own inventions. So, my friends, it is with the people in our day; they are educated in their youth, according to many vain superstitions. These vanities in process of time, became incorporated into their religion, and are venerated as divine principles.

The clergy so contrive as to have the grossest errors and most unreasonable superstitions taught to children, and impressed on their tender minds with all possible solemnity. What are called Sunday schools are particularly improved for such purposes. The child is informed; in the first place, that its nature is altogether bad, that it is an entirely depraved being; that its very nature is such as it is at enmity against God; and that it hates God: also that God is a being who possesses infinite indignation and wrath towards all such; and that he has prepared a burning lake of brimstone, into which they who are thus sinners, are exposed to fall every moment. The child is informed that it deserves to be sent to hell for ever; and that it is suspended over the burning lake by the brittle thread of life, and that the divine wrath, like an all-devouring flame, is extending itself to consume this thread, and to precipitate its victim into remediless woe.

The child, who is thus taught, surely would never have thought of these things, if it had not

been told him. It feels no hatred towards God until a god of a hateful character is erroneously held up to its mind. It would know nothing of this natural depravity, if its instructors had not imposed such an idea on it. Nothing in nature would ever have suggested to the child, that it deserved to go to hell for ever after death. Nothing in the economy of divine providence would ever have suggested to his mind, that the divine ruler was possessed of an unmerciful vengeance and wrath towards him. All these are unnatural, unreasonable ideas; they are the work of erroneous imaginations, fostered by superstition and priestcraft.

Agreeably to this erroneous beginning, priestcraft goes on with its labours, and endeavours to establish a religion consisting of attributes of a similar description. And the religion, the duty, and the whole scheme of what passes for divinity with our schools of error, correspond as perfectly with those errors taught to children, as the *Horeb calf* did with the *Apts* of Egypt. The preachers of antichristian doctrines endeavour, to the utmost of their abilities, using all their learning, all their arts, and all the powers of eloquence, to operate on the fears of their hearers. From pulpits people are in the habit of hearing laboured representations of the torments of a future state, under the dispensation of the divine vengeance; and he is called the best preacher who can succeed in the most horrible representation of the divine character, and of the miseries of the future world. Such preaching, being assisted with other corresponding means, frequently produces what are called awakenings, excitements, revivals, and reformations. Some, one or two, are exercised with great distress of mind; fears of hell are worked up in their apprehensions, and they are said to be convicted of sin. Now is the time for Aaron the priest to exert his skill. He goes to these unhappy wretches, and putting on all the gloom of counte-

nance which the rigidity of his profession has rendered familiar, and modulating his voice in a way to heighten the horrors which already occupy the mind, he prefaces with several long and deep sighs, and then proceeds to gather ear-rings and jewels as follows ; Do you view yourself lost and undone by nature ? Do you now realize that you hate God ? Do you see the holiness of the divine vengeance for your sins, and the justice in your being sent to hell for ever ? All these jewels are delivered to the priest, and of them he forms the calf. When every feature of this Egyptian god is perfectly formed, it is customary for the priest to pronounce the subject of those horrors, *hopefully converted*. We frequently find published in religious papers, and in religious tracts, accounts of these wonderful conversions. The narration will detail the particular exercises of mind, and set forth the views which the subject had, when it is supposed that the divine spirit had the control. In these accounts we are informed that poor sinners were made sensible of their lost condition by nature, their desperate hatred towards God, and the justice of the divine law in demanding their utter destruction. And sometimes it is carefully inserted, that the converts were deeply impressed with the entire falsity of the doctrine of universal salvation. But the Priests, who give us these accounts, are as careful not to intimate that they were the authors of all these views and exercises, as Aaron was not to own that he formed the molten calf and fashioned it with a graving tool. But whoever will take the liberty to examine these things, and compare them ; whoever will judge of them according to common rules of judging of other things, will be satisfied at once, that all their gloomy fears, all their erroneous notions about the depravity of our nature, of our natural hatred towards God, of God's enmity and wrath towards us, and, of the justice of our eternal condemnation, when brought together and consolidated into one

mass, is nothing but a Moloch formed by priestcraft ; an idol produced in the schools of superstition, and carefully guarded by the holy office.

My friends, I solemnly declare that I feel no opposition, no enmity against any denomination of religionists in the world, if I know my own heart. These remarks are not designed against men; against my fellow beings ; but I acknowledge my determined opposition to all priestcraft, to all religious deception ; and I openly avow my entire devotedness to the work of rending the vail of superstition from the minds of men to the utmost of my feeble abilities. I hold in utter abhorrence the craft and art by which thousands are deceived, and made to believe, that the spirit of God teaches these abominations, which are as unlike God, as was the Moloch of the ancients, to whom thousands of innocent children were sacrificed. If we can be persuaded to believe that the divine spirit teaches such religion as we have noticed, then, of course, it becomes our duty to kneel before it and honour it with the devotion of our hearts. It appears to have been the design of Aaron to deceive Moses, and make him believe that the calf was miraculously formed, when he knew that he formed it himself. I should be glad with all my heart, to save Aaron from this imputation, but it is out of my power. And I should be equally glad to save our antichristian clergy from the imputations here suggested, but it is equally out of my power. Every feature, every attribute of false religion is a direct and palpable testimony that the spirit of the true God has nothing to do with its whole scheme. The fingers of the priests of Baal have had the fashioning of every part of this idol ; and as Moses ground the Horeb calf to powder, and gave it to those who made it, to drink, so those who have fashioned false religion, must receive its deadly qualities to themselves.

To a heart of sensibility, the consideration of the evil effects of this priestcraft, is peculiarly af-

fecting. The dismal horrors which are reiterated from pulpits, so powerfully operate on weak nerves, as to produce effects truly lamentable. The female part of the audience is generally most affected ; and these abominable notions produce in the minds of women and children such concern as banishes all comfort, and drives many even to despair entirely of the mercy of heaven. It is so well known by the clergy, that these gloomy fears have a greater power on female minds than on men, that they almost uniformly attack this weaker part. And some have given it as their opinion, that there will many more women be saved, than there will be of men. What makes them think so is, they find it easier to lead women into their notions, than to lead men. In consistency with these remarks, we find the most women in those congregations where the most of this gloomy doctrine of divine vengeance, eternal misery, &c. is held up. These remarks regard the subject generally. There are, females, to the honour of the sex be it observed, that are too sensible to be led away by that which is destitute of either scripture authority or the dictates of reason.

It is enough to melt one's heart into pity and compassion, to observe the operations of this false religion on the minds of children. It is not long since I was told of a poor distressed child, who, on its return from a sunday school, went to its parent and burst into tears, exclaiming, "I wish I had never been born !" With surprise and compassion the parent inquired the cause of this bitterness of soul ; when the child replied, I must go to hell and burn for ever in fire and brimstone ! Thus early does priestcraft begin its operations, operations most insidious, artful, and deleterious.

We may now proceed to notice how those who make and worship this antichristian idol are plagued and even tormented. And here we shall do well to observe, that it is not because our heavenly Father is possessed of any enmity towards

his deluded children, that they are thus plagued ; but these torments are the necessary consequences of false ideas of God, and of the services which superstition imposes on the deceived. A fair sample of this may be seen in the idolatrous worship into which the Israelites degenerated, when they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Moloch. What must have been the distress of parents, who became so infatuated as to offer their little children in sacrifice to this abomination. Christian professors vainly imagine that such idolatry is most stupid, and offensive to God ; but they kneel to an altar, on which millions of infants are devoted to a deity, whose wrath, they think, will kindle a flame upon them to all eternity ! And, my friends, will you allow yourselves to reflect, one moment, on the aggregate amount of misery which such religion produces in what is called christian communities ? Who can be otherwise than miserable, while believing that they themselves, their connexions, their dear children are every moment exposed to drop into unspeakable torment ? Not only are the tenets of false religion fraught with consequences resulting in the misery of poor deluded mortals, but all the duties it requires are burdensome. We constantly hear the outcries of the superstitious, representing the hardships they undergo in the service of their deity. They acknowledge themselves, that were it not, that they expect a reward hereafter, for their religious duties performed, if they were not in fear that God will administer, in the future world, dreadful torments on them, they would, by no means attend to the duties of their religion, but would indulge in every vice to which blind passion should lead. In this, we have their honest confession, that their God is a tyrant, is a real Moloch, who takes delight in the misery of his subjects, and is so pleased with their sufferings, that he is willing to reward all such as will voluntarily torment themselves for his gratification ! We have

here also their honest confession, that their religious duties are irksome, and that they think they deserve a recompense in the world to come, as they have none in this ! Thus they are plagued because they make the calf which their priests make. The blind lead the blind, and all fall into the ditch together.

As the image of the Egyptian idol was in the minds of the Israelites, it was natural for them to give their idol the same form ; and so it is with idol-makers in our times. They form their Molochs according to images which exist in their own deceived hearts, and furnish them with their own spirit and passion. We may learn the disposition of the deity people worship by the disposition of his worshippers ; or we may learn their disposition by the disposition of their idol. There is not a quality in one which is not in the other ; and for this good reason, the idol exists no where, but in the imagination and disposition of these idolaters. St. Paul says, and very justly, " We know that an idol is nothing in the world." When professors of religion exercise a bitter, persecuting spirit towards those who do not conform to their notions, they are always able to vindicate the justice of their unmerciful cruelty by the *vindictive* justice of their equally unmerciful deity ; and when they doom their fellow creatures to a state of endless sufferings, they can look up and see the wrath of their offended idol, all hot and ready to be poured down on their devoted heads ! But after all, my friends, the whole of this vastly extensive scenery, the idol, the heaven he resides in, his wrath, together with the hell in which the subjects of his fury are to be tormented are no where in the whole universe, only in the deceived hearts of those idolaters. What an incalculable aggregate of misery is endured, by the millions, who are devoted to the service of such superstitions. Those who worship, worship out of fear, and those who do not

are afraid to attempt it, lest they should offend by some mistake.

Let us turn from all this scene of misery and servile religion, and lend an ear to the celestial voice of comfort. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is the voice of the Prince of peace; it is the language of the teacher sent of God. Jesus did not come to load men with burdens grievous to be borne: but he came to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free. This divine instructor was never known to set forth the Father of spirits, as a being full of vindictive wrath and indignation towards men; but on the contrary, he taught the people that God was their Father; that he is more kind to men than any earthly father is to his offspring: and that in room of hating the wicked, who are his enemies, he loves them and blesses them. This infinitely glorious truth, the blessed Saviour laid as the foundation of the true faith, and as a perfect model, according to which, he directed his disciples to conduct towards their fellow men. He never taught the people, that they were sinners by nature; that they, even in childhood, naturally hated God; that divine justice, like a devouring flame, was continually burning with vengeance towards them, for what they were by nature: or that they were in danger, every moment, of falling into a hell of endless misery. We have no account in the New-Testament, that Jesus asked such questions of those whom he called to be his disciples, as are now asked of such as are acknowledged as converts to the religion of our day. He never asked one of his followers, whether he realized that he was an enemy to God by nature, or whether he was sensible that he hated his heavenly Father; or whether he could see clearly that it would

be just with God to sentence him to misery for ever ; or whether he would be willing to be eternally miserable for the glory of God. But he revealed the lovely character of the Father of infinite mercy and compassion ; and uttered such gracious words, and performed such miracles of grace, that the people were attracted and drawn to him by vast multitudes. And had it not been for the superstitious religion of his time, a superstition which seems now to be in fashion, it seems that the whole nation of the Jews would have embraced the Saviour and his gospel at once.

This superstition now stands forth to oppose the progress of divine light, and the spread of impartial grace : but its power is but weak, its influence is vastly diminished ; while the Prince of peace and salvation is extending the triumphs of his grace, and thousands are rejoicing to see his day.

My friends, let us no longer worship the idol of superstition ; let us no longer bow down to that which is an abomination ; let us no longer imagine that our heavenly Father is possessed of these cruel, unmerciful passions, which have disgraced the christian name with persecutions too horrid to contemplate, and anathematized millions, for whom the Saviour died, with curses more horrid still. But let us learn of Him who has taught us to love one another, to love our enemies, to bless and curse not.

The religion of Jesus is confidence in the divine favours ; it is hope in everlasting life ; it is forgiveness to those who injure us ; it is fervent in supplications for those who despitefully use us and persecute us. This religion is designed to overcome evil with good, and to reconcile all things to God : so that every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

SERMON XIII.

FEAST OF KNOWLEDGE.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE SECOND SABBATH IN MARCH, 1822.

JEREMIAH, III. 15.

"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

In this prophetic testimony, the divine Being promises to give his people pastors, instructors or teachers according to his own heart. By this we learn that God will not leave it to the wisdom of this world to appoint a ministry; but that he will see to this himself, and will endow those whom he appoints with his wisdom, his mind, and his will.

The great object of this ministry is clearly defined. It is not to amuse the people with mysterious dogmas, and to draw over their eyes a bandage of superstition, rendered sacred by tradition; but its object is to feed the people with knowledge and understanding. This directs us to consider that all the subjects on which the true ministry labours, are such as the teacher knows to be true, and such as he understands: they are such as people may be taught to know and understand.

When the wisdom of this world sets up religion, and appoints a ministry, it takes care that those who are thus appointed, are according to itself in heart and affections; who will be faithful to its cause, and who will studiously oppose the wisdom, mind, and will of God. When theological institutions send out ministers, care is taken that their

wisdom, their minds and their wills, are all in accordance with the scheme of doctrine maintained by the institutions to which they owe their authority. What must we naturally expect from such teachers? Answer: they will feed the people with all the inconsistencies and contradictions, all the partiality and vindictive wrath, which are maintained in the schools where they were educated. As an example of what we here state, we refer you to the theological institution at Jerusalem; at the head of which was placed Dr. Gamaliel. Saul, the persecutor, was a pupil of this school of divinity; and he was according to the spirit, wisdom, and disposition of that institution. In perfect accordance with the interest of that wisdom in which he had been taught, he was exceedingly mad against Christ and his religion; and breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his disciples. By the authority which stood in support of the institution, at which this persecutor was doctinated, he was authorized to take all that believed in the name of Jesus, and commit them to prison, whether men or women. But when this same person was appointed a minister of Jesus Christ, it was the work of no theological school of human establishment; it was the work of that God, who says in our text,—“I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” What an amazing change is this, which was effected in this infuriated persecutor! He is no longer in the spirit and interest of the school where he had obtained his education; but he is now in the spirit and interest of the gospel of Jesus Christ, whom he had before persecuted.

Had it been left to the Jews and Gentiles to have set up a ministry, and to appoint ministers, the doctrine of Jesus would not have been their scheme; nor would men, such as were the apostles of the Saviour, been appointed to its public labours.

From motives, by which the human heart is susceptible of influence, individuals may take it upon themselves to become pastors or teachers. They may be deceived, and believe that God has sent them, when it is only the desire of their own hearts, occasioned by a zeal which is not according to knowledge: or they may appoint themselves to this work, because they desire those honours and emoluments which they find are attached to the profession. But my friends, there is not the least difficulty in determining whether a man be appointed by himself, or whether he be sent of God. If he has appointed himself, he will preach himself. But he will endeavour, first of all, to make you believe that he is sent of God. To do this, he will talk much about his love of, and concern for your poor souls. He will appear to be in an agony for the salvation of precious, immortal souls. He will solemnly declare how much he prays for your conversion, and that you may have an interest in the Saviour. He will inform you, that he weeps for you in the silent hours of the night; and that he is willing to spend and be spent for your salvation. When people hear all this, they say, this must be a good man, a good minister; how he loves our souls! This, my friends, is just what he wishes you to think and say. His object is now obtained. Your minds are placed on him; you love him in return for his loving you, or saying he loves you; and this is the object he had in view when he told you all these things. If he had been appointed by our heavenly Father, if he had been a minister of Jesus Christ, he would have employed his arguments to persuade you to believe in the love of God, manifested through his Son to a sinful world. But he will not allow that God is as much engaged in the salvation of your souls as he is. If you ask him if he would save all men, if it were in his power, he would answer, Yes; even if it cost my life. If you ask him whether God has power

to save all men, he will very coolly answer in the affirmative; but will not allow that he loves his creatures enough to exert this power for their salvation. Now which is the best being, this minister, who would save all men if he could, or his God, who has this power, and yet will not do it? The minister, be sure. Which do the people love the best? Him, who they believe loves them the best. Our subject is now perfectly clear. The preacher appointed himself, and he preaches himself: he stands directly between God and the people, and their eyes are on him, and not on God; they love him, but do not love God: they put their trust in him, but not in God. Jesus said, "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Ministers who directly, or indirectly imply, in their preaching, that they are better than our Father in heaven; and talk of their own love and zeal, certainly seek their own glory; and to exalt themselves in the estimation of the people.

The attention of the audience is now invited to the consideration of the holy things which are to be ministered to the people. Remember, our text says, "which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." This, we have already observed, gives us to understand, that the preachers sent of God, preach what they know and understand; and what the people can know and understand.

We shall here take the liberty to call up a few leading articles in the orthodox creed, which for ages have been considered as indispensable truths: a deviation from which, excludes from the Christian communion and fellowship. We shall not, at this time, undertake to disprove those inventions of human wisdom; but only to inquire whether they are facts which are known and understood. If they are, then they are the proper subjects to be ministered as spiritual food to the people: but

if not, then the conclusion is unavoidable, that those who preach them, do not, in so doing, feed you with knowledge and understanding.

The first particular which we will at this time, call in question, is what is called the fall of man. This doctrine supposes that Adam, by one transgression, effected a radical change in his natural constitution, and in the natural constitution of all his numerous posterity ; so that whereas he was a holy being before, he and all his posterity were unholy ever after this first transgression. We say nothing concerning the natural absurdity of this sentiment, nor shall we labour, at this time, to prove it false ; but we would ask whether those divines, who have inculcated such a sentiment, know it to be a fact ? Suppose it were true, how do preachers know it ? Is it so written in the scriptures ? No ; there is not a word of this sort in the sacred writings. The fact is, if this notion be true, no man knows it to be so ; there is no possible way that he should know it ; and therefore, it does not belong to the labours of the true ministry. You have heard this doctrine laboured by learned divines ; did you ever understand it ? You answer, No. Then you were never fed, by such preaching, with knowledge and understanding.

Another subject, which has been held in equal veneration as the former, is the sentiment that all mankind, by the fall, became liable to the pains of hell for ever.

We ask, do preachers know this to be a fact ? Do we read this sentiment in the holy scriptures ? These questions must be answered in the negative. We read nothing of it, nor does any man know it to be a fact. Then we say, it does not belong to those provisions which the true ministry is designed to minister to the people. Those divines who found it convenient to insert this tenet in the creed which has been so long worshipped, also stated, that God, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life. My friends, did they understand

themselves ? How could Adam's sin render those liable to the pains of hell for ever, whom God had elected to everlasting life, from all eternity ? These statements are in close connection in the creed, but it is certain that they are diametrically opposed to each other. Can you, my friends, understand how Adam's sin could render those liable to the pains of hell for ever, whom God elected to everlasting life from all eternity ? You answer, that you never understood it. Then by such preaching you were never fed with knowledge and understanding.

Respecting this particular election of *some* to everlasting life ; do you believe that those preachers who hold up this sentiment, and endeavour to persuade you to believe that our Creator made a distinction among men, from all eternity, designing some to everlasting life, and predestinating others to endless destruction, know this to be a fact ? After all you have heard them say on this subject, do you believe that they could state, with perfect safety, that they know this doctrine to be true ? Have they so instructed you, that you can say that you know it to be a fact ? You must answer these questions in the negative ; and therefore, those who have preached it, have not fed you with knowledge and understanding.

Another very important tenet, contained in orthodox divinity, and which has been for a long time held most sacred, is the notion, that what the scriptures mean by regeneration, or a new birth, is a radical change of our nature ; which change is an instantaneous work of the divine spirit, wrought in the soul, by which change the subject is brought back to that holy state in which God created man. There is scarcely any subject more insisted on than this, by ministers of our schools. But do they certainly know this to be a fact ? Do they know that they are changed as to their nature ? Do they know for certainty that any body else is ? It is not customary to allow a person to be his own judge

in this case. If you wish to know whether you have met with this mysterious, instantaneous change, you must go to your minister, and be examined; and let the church and the minister judge for you. If they say you are changed, you are; but if they say to the contrary, you are the same person you ever was. How much, my friends, have you ever known and understood concerning this mysterious change? We are under the necessity of saying that no man knows any thing about it; no man understands any thing about it: and therefore, by its being preached, you have not been fed with knowledge and understanding.

When we seriously contemplate the little arts and cunningly devised means which are employed to procure in weak minds a notion that their wild, enthusiastic imaginations are the operations of the spirit of God, and that they are changed from a state of nature, we are under the necessity of saying, in the face of all the orthodoxy in the world, that it appears to us, to be trifling about serious things. You are acquainted with those who pretend to be changed as we have described; but should you know that they were thus changed if they did not say they were? They eat, and drink, and sleep as they always did; and when they are pleased, they are agreeable; and when they are offended, they are as they used to be in the same condition. Yet they pretend that their nature is changed!

My friends, I caution you against supposing that I do not believe in all the scriptures say respecting regeneration, or being born again; but the scriptures no where intimate a change of nature; but represent the favourable effects of the gospel, and the religion of the Saviour, by washing, cleansing, enlightening, quickening, teaching, instructing, reclaiming the lost, returning the wanderer, &c. &c. All which emblems refer to an improvement for the better, but to no change of nature. Another immense subject, on which the minis-

try of the wisdom of this world has laboured with great zeal, and for which it has contended as if heaven was to be obtained by believing it, is what is termed the doctrine of the *holy trinity*. Preachers talk about God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the holy Ghost: they talk of a triune God; a God-head consisting of three persons, equal in power and glory, &c. This they do not pretend to understand; nor do they even attempt to assist their hearers in understanding it. They call it a holy mystery; but require you to believe it with all your heart, and consider it an indispensable article of faith. Now if they do not understand this, then they do not feed the people with knowledge and understanding by preaching it. We read nothing of a *triune* God in the scriptures; nothing of a *trinity*; nothing said of three persons in the God-head. Why then is this article contended for with so much zeal? If this doctrine be true, no man knows it; no man understands it; it is not a knowable fact if it be true. Yet how much has this subject been enforced on the minds of people who were unable to understand it. This is not feeding the people with knowledge and understanding.

The last particular which I shall now call in question, is the subject of rewards and punishments. It has been the object of orthodoxy to persuade the people to believe, that in God's all-wise economy, he does not recompense virtue and true religion in this world, where the truly humble and faithful disciples of Christ live in obedience to his requirements; but that such are, as it were, given over to afflictions in this world; but are to receive the recompense for their virtues here practised, in a future state. And on the contrary, it has been contended that sin and wickedness are not punished here where they are practised, but that the wicked are permitted to enjoy a life of pleasure and prosperity, but are to be punished in the future world. We shall here ask, whether

preachers know that this is true? Do they certainly know that virtue is not rewarded and evil punished in this present state? My friends, you have heard much preached on this subject; have you understood it? Do you know and understand that all our penal laws are made for the righteous? Is it the virtuous part of community, that are deprived of their liberty, shut up in penitentiaries, publicly executed? Are those who live in the lowest degradation, misery and distress, those who are the most virtuous, upright, prudent, temperate, industrious, faithful in friendship, continent and faithful husbands, true and loving wives, tender and provident parents, obedient children, just in their dealings, pious and devout in their lives, lovers of God and man? Is all this known? Is it all understood? And have our orthodox preachers so fed you with knowledge and understanding, that you now know and understand, that the most wicked, most abandoned, the most irreligious and impious are the most happy members of society? Do they enjoy peace in their consciences, are they at peace in their families, have they all the enjoyments that can render them happy? The fact is, you know that all this is absolutely the reverse of truth. St. Paul says; "the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Do our preachers, who contend that sin is not punished in this world understand how their doctrine agrees with the testimony of the Apostle here quoted? Did they ever give you to under-

stand, how these ordinances of justice can be the ordinances of God, to execute wrath on those who do evil, and yet that God does not punish the wicked in this world? This certainly never can be understood; and therefore all such preaching as disallows the punishment of sin in this world amounts to a declaration that our ordinances of justice are not the ordinances of God. In the law, given by Moses, crimes and their punishments were carefully and clearly defined; and God gave directions in what manner recompense for sin should be administered; but whoever has read this law, with any proper attention, knows that the penal code no more extends into a future world, than does our penal code. And if the testimony of God, respecting the punishments he would inflict on the people of the Jews, for their national sins, be carefully examined, we find no intimation in all the law and the prophets of extending these punishments into a future state. If we read the dealings of God with that people, or with any other, and inquire concerning the judgments which he has executed; we find all confined to this present state. With all this immense authority before them, with the history of the world's misery, in consequence of sin, spread before their eyes, and with the open vision of the immense aggregate of suffering under which millions groan, in consequence of evil doing, our orthodox preachers will compose and preach studied sermons; embellished with all the beauties of rhetoric, and delivered in the most becoming airs of oratory, designed to enforce the belief that God sees fit to defer the punishment of sin to a future state of our existence! This, my friends is not feeding you with knowledge and understanding. If our heavenly Father has designed to punish us in a future world for our follies in this, it is not known to any living man, and whoever preaches it, preaches what he does not know to be a truth, and what he can give no one else to know.

It is time to withdraw from the contemplation

of these things, which although they form the principal part of the minister's subjects, as directed by our schools of error, are not among the known things, which the true ministry has in charge to administer to the people: and pass to consider the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which he and his apostles preached. Jesus, the great apostle and high priest of the christian dispensation, preached the doctrine of God's love to the world, and demonstrated it by such emblems as could be known and understood. He referred the people to the fact, to the known fact, that our heavenly Father causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust, as proof positive, that he loves all men; and that it is our duty to imitate our heavenly Father in this impartial goodness. My friends, will you carefully assist me in calling up one important question in this place? Why do not our preachers, who endeavour to inculcate the doctrine of partial election and reprobation, refer us to the same emblems as Jesus does? Why do they not say, that we may know that God, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, and that he reprobated all the rest to endless woe, by the blessings of sunshine and of rain? Here the answer is plain; the evidence contradicts what they wish to prove; and therefore, you never hear them use it in this way. The blessed Saviour directed his preaching to the hearts and affections of his hearers; he made an appeal to the tenderest affections of the human heart; and when endeavouring to set forth the love of his father, said, "what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" What is the evident doctrine of this passage? It is this: you have all the encouragement possible

to trust in God, and to seek to him for all you need, as he is your Father, and more kind than you can be to your own offspring. Here again, I ask your assistance in calling up a question similar to the last. Why do not our preachers appeal to our affections, as Jesus did; and say, you may know that this doctrine of election is true by your own feelings; for what man of you, having two sons, would not prefer to feed one, and starve the other; rather than to feed them both? What father would not choose to give to one hungry son the bread he needs, and to the other a stone in room of bread? The answer is plain; the evidence denies the fact, and proves, beyond all contradiction, that the doctrine has nothing in all the economy of the divine providence, to set it up, or corroborate it.

The miracles which the Saviour wrought, were divine manifestations of impartial goodness; they were not confined to any one sect, nor did he inquire whether the subjects of such favours were worthy or unworthy; nor are we informed that an instance ever occurred, in which the Saviour denied a favour, because the subject was not of the elect. As Jesus preached, so he lived; and as he preached and lived, so he died; and his dying prayer is a perfect transcript of his doctrine; and manifests the genius and spirit of his religion:—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." His resurrection from the dead, brought life and immortality to light; but it did not bring a future state of sin and misery to light. Jesus taught the doctrine of the resurrection, and he proved it true. This glorious doctrine was openly manifested, and known to be a fact.

The Apostles of Jesus followed his example, and fed the people with knowledge and understanding. We read their testimony and rejoice in believing. St. Paul says, "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself

a ransom for all to be testified in due time—We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, now crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man—As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life—Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord—For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord—For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus—Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” In addition to these gospel declarations, the apostles of the lamb endeavoured to give the people to understand, that there is peace in believing and in obeying the truth, but tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. They taught that the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, teaches us that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, and that good works are good and profitable unto men.

My friends, let us listen to that instruction which feeds us with knowledge and understanding, let us forsake the foolish and live.

SERMON XIV.

ST. PAUL A UNIVERSALIST

DELIVERED IN BOSTON ON THE FIRST SABBATH IN SEPT., 1822.

1 TIMOTHY II. 7.

“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher.”

THE object of the discourse, now to be delivered from the words just read, is to make it appear, to the satisfaction of the candid hearer, that St. Paul was a believer in, and a preacher of universal salvation.

My Christian friends, do you ask how this fact can be proved? The answer is ready; it is to be proved by the same sort of means as we prove other facts. By what evidence can we prove that John Calvin was not a believer in, nor a preacher of universal salvation? Answer: By referring to his writings, to his institutes, and to the testimony of faithful historians. By referring to such undoubted authority, we prove that the faith taught by this reformer of the church, embraced, among other distinguishing points, the following. “God hath chosen a certain number of the fallen race of Adam in Christ, before the foundation of the world, unto eternal glory, according to his immutable purpose, and of his free grace and love, without the least foresight of faith, good works, or any conditions performed by the creature; and that the rest of mankind he was pleased to pass by, and ordain to dishonour and wrath, for their sins, to

the praise of his vindictive justice." From this plain statement of fact, we are perfectly satisfied that this author did not believe in the salvation of all men ; for if he had, he certainly would not have taught that God *pleased* to pass by and ordain a certain part of the human race to dishonour and wrath, in distinction from another certain part, whom he chose from all eternity in Christ to eternal glory. Now it is perfectly evident, that if God, from all eternity, ordained some men to eternal glory, and the rest to eternal wrath, it never was consistent with the divine will that all men should be saved ; nor can it be consistent with the divine will that the saints should pray for those whom God has ordained unto wrath ; nor is it consistent with the spirit of God, that the saints should entertain a desire that all men should be made partakers of the divine favour ; nor can it be true, that the one mediator between God and men has given himself a ransom for all men. These particulars are mentioned that the hearer may better understand the consistency of the argument, which will be used in favour of our main subject.

We may again ask, how we can prove that James Arminius was not a believer in either Calvinism or Universalism ? The answer is as easy in this case, as in the former. By referring to this author, and by attention to the faithful historian, we are assured, that although Arminius had been educated in the sentiments of Calvin, he afterwards renounced them, and contended among other points, which distinguished his belief from that of Calvin, that the salvation of man was conditional. It is not necessary to be further particular in respect to these two leaders ; the whole christian commonwealth is entirely satisfied that neither John Calvin nor James Arminius was a Universalist, and this conviction arises from their writings. Begging further indulgence, we may ask once more, how can we prove, that Mahomet was not a Universalist, and that he believed in a judgment

in the future state, and that some of the human family will be received to a state of eternal happiness, and others be sent into a state of endless misery, while others will be consigned to a place of torment for a season, like the papal purgatory, from which they will finally be delivered? The answer is, we prove these facts by referring to the Alcoran, and the writings of faithful historians. Now it is just in the same way that we prove, that Mahomet, John Calvin, and James Arminius were not Universalists, that we prove that St. Paul was a believer in, and a preacher of this glorious doctrine of God's universal, impartial grace; that is, by referring to his writings.

In the first place, let us look at, and carefully examine our text. "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher." Unto what was he ordained a preacher? Answer: He was ordained a preacher of the sentiment which he had just expressed, and to which he alluded in the words of our text. This sentiment is first expressed in an exhortation as follows. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." This exhortation makes it perfectly evident, that St. Paul did not believe, that God had, before the foundation of the world, ordained a part of the human family to endless wrath; for had this been his sentiment, he surely would not have exhorted to pray for them; nor would he have exhorted to give thanks for them. To pray and give thanks for those, for whom we believe there is no favour in God, manifests an inconsistency which indicates stupidity, and an absurdity which is strongly tinged with impiety. Hence it is evident, that the Apostle believed that there was favour in our heavenly Father for all men, and that all were partakers of his goodness.

2. This sentiment is clearly expressed in the

reason, which the Apostle gives for praying and for giving thanks for all men, as follows. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." This is testimony direct to our subject ; it proves that St. Paul believed that it is God's will that all men be saved. This is the testimony which he states as the reason for praying and for giving thanks for all men. To see this subject, if possible, more clearly, let us reverse it. If the Apostle had been divinely inspired to state to the people, that God, from before the foundation of the world, chose some of the human race, in Christ, unto eternal glory ; and that it was the divine pleasure to pass by all the rest, and ordain them to endless wrath, could he have stated what we have just quoted from his testimony ? Could he have exhorted to pray and to give thanks for all men, and assign as a reason therefore, that it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth ? Can any one entertain so mean an opinion of the mighty mind of our Apostle, as to suppose him capable of believing, that God had ordained, from before the foundation of the world, that millions of the human race should suffer his wrath for ever, and at the same time believe that it is the will of this same God that all men should be saved ? My friends, if you could find, in the writings of John Calvin, such exhortations and testimony as we have here quoted from St. Paul, would you pretend that he was consistent with himself ? Or if you found, in his writings, this exhortation to pray and give thanks for all men, and the testimony that it is good and acceptable in the sight of God, who will have all men to be saved, and if you found nothing in his writings to the contrary of this, would you doubt his belief in universal salvation ? These questions must be answered in a way to substantiate our main subject, (*viz.*)

that St. Paul was a believer in, and a preacher of universal salvation.

3. This sentiment is corroborated by an important declaration of the Apostle, which follows the last quoted, and which stands as evidence and support of the proposition that it is the will of God that all men should be saved. It reads as follows.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This declaration, that the one mediator gave himself a ransom for all men, and that this ransom was to be testified in due time, evidently shows, that it was the Apostle's belief, that, in consequence of the will of God in the salvation of all men, the mediator had given himself a ransom for all, and that this universal ransom was a truth to be testified to the people. The next words are those we have chosen to lead this discourse:—"Whereunto I am ordained a preacher." The evident meaning of the Apostle, in these words, is, that he was ordained a preacher of the sentiment which he had just expressed, which sentiment we have already shown to be that of universal salvation.

The statements which we have already noticed, and which fully express this heart-rejoicing sentiment, are the three following. 1st, The christian duty of praying and of giving thanks for all men; 2d, the will of God that all men should be saved; and, 3dly, that the one mediator between God and men, gave himself a ransom for all. Christian friends, do we go at all beyond the bounds of fair reasoning when we say, that it appears to us, that these three statements necessarily amount to the sentiment, which we contend, St. Paul believed and preached? Or do we at all go beyond the limits of evidence in the case, when we say, that it was the evident intention of the Apostle to state this sentiment, in plain, unequivocal language? However others may consider it, we rejoice to

say, that this is the honest conviction of our hearts.

Let us take still another view of this subject, by asking whether it must not be admitted that the Apostle intended to state something, that he believed, was the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ? There can be no doubt of this. Then we ask what doctrine the Apostle did state? Did he state the doctrine of particular election and reprobation? Or did he state a conditional salvation? Is there any part of the statements, to which the Apostle alludes in our text, that indicates that he believed or preached either a partial or a conditional salvation? Candor must and will acknowledge that there is not. Then we necessarily come to the same conclusion as before.

4. We find abundant evidence, in support of the subject of these arguments, in other parts of St. Paul's writings. In the introduction of his epistle to the Romans he declares himself to be "a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God;" and in the same chapter he says—"I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." It is worthy of remark here, that by being separated unto the work of the gospel ministry, the Apostle was made a *debtor* to Greeks and Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, and that in order to discharge this debt, he must preach the gospel to them. Wise and unwise comprehend all men; and if the Apostle was made a debtor to all men by receiving a dispensation of the gospel, it follows necessarily, that this gospel is what he states it in our context, when he says, that God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

In the 3d chapter of this epistle, the author has, in a most compendious manner, stated his belief of the condition of all men, in respect to their sinful

character, and also in respect to the gracious scheme of divine mercy towards them. The following are his words: "Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God—For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

No candid brother, of any denomination, will pretend that the Apostle did not mean here to comprehend all men in the number which he represents as guilty before God; and we appeal to the candor of all, to judge if he could mean any less than all men, when he said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Here notice; all have sinned; and all that have sinned are justified freely by the grace of that God, against whom they have sinned, and of whose glory they have all come short; and this gracious justification is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and this Christ Jesus is the one mediator between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all men, to be testified in due time.

Brethren, you will not fail to observe the harmony of the Apostle's testimony, which cannot fail to work conviction of the truth which we are endeavouring to prove. On the same universal subject, of which he speaks in the 3d chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he again treats in a most luminous argument, in the 5th, the result of which argument he states as follows: "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life—Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath

reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." With a view to set our argument in a clear light, and to bring it in a form which may be most visible, we will suppose that our Apostle believed and preached the doctrine which Calvin believed and preached. We will suppose that the Apostle was firm in the opinion that God, from all eternity, chose some to eternal glory, and ordained the rest to endless wrath ; and we will suppose also, that he was an honest man, and preached and wrote what he believed. But what does he say ? He says that " God will have all men to be saved ;" that Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all ; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified by his grace through the redemption which is in him who gave himself a ransom for all ; that by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life." My friends, did John Calvin ever express his doctrine in such language ? Does such language convey the sentiments of partial election and reprobation ? Let the honest and candid question be asked ; do those who, in our day, contend for partial election, ever quote these scriptures of St. Paul's writings to prove their doctrine ? You exclaim, at once, No, by no means. Why do they not ? Because they know that such passages prove no such doctrine. Then we must ask what doctrine they do support. They certainly support some doctrine. All this testimony on such a vast subject must mean something. Well, says the candid hearer, I acknowledge that these passages do mean something, and that they cannot mean the doctrine of partial election and reprobation ; but do they not mean that salvation is free to all men on conditions ? No, my brethren, you can no more reconcile the Apostle's testimony with this doctrine than with the former. The Apostle does not say, that God will have all men to be saved on conditions. He does not say

that Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all men, *on conditions*. He does not say that all, who have sinned and come short of the glory of God, are freely justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, *on conditions*. Nor does he say, that by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life, *on conditions*. Nor does he say, that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, *on conditions*. Nor does he say, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, *on conditions*.

In the 8th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, speaking of the whole human race, in the most comprehensive language which could have been chosen, the Apostle says ; " For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected the same in hope ; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here the inspired author clearly comprehends the whole creation that was made subject to vanity, and certifies its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

After a laboured exposition of the dealings of divine wisdom with the house of Israel, in which is set forth the blindness of those who were broken off from their olive tree, through unbelief, also their stumbling and their fall, and their being cast away for the reconciling of the world, and that the fall of them was the riches of the Gentiles, the Apostle comes to this conclusion in the 11th chapter ; " I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest you should be wise

in your own conceit,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.—And so all Israel shall be saved—For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all (both Jews and Gentiles) in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”

It may be well to notice in this place, that the Apostle's argument, in the 11th of Romans, is as clear and direct a refutation of the doctrine of partial election and reprobation, as can be stated in any possible form. And we feel disposed to call on our brethren, who profess to believe that the Apostle has given support to what is commonly called election and reprobation, carefully to examine the 9th and 11th chapters of his epistle to the Romans, in connexion; for it is in the 9th that they think they find authority for their doctrine; but if they will carefully read the 11th in connexion with the 9th they will be fully satisfied that their conclusions have been erroneous; and that this inspired Apostle has not, in any case, contradicted his testimony, that God will have all men to be saved.

In our introduction it was stated, that we can as easily prove what St. Paul's doctrine is, as we can prove what doctrines Mahomet, John Calvin, and James Arminius maintained; and as we have already shown that the Apostle's doctrine is widely different from those of the two last, we will now show, by one plain argument, quoted from his 1st epistle to the Corinthians 15th chapter, that the Apostle did not believe in the doctrine of a future judgment, after the resurrection, which will result in rewarding some of the human family with everlasting happiness, for their good works in this world; and the everlasting misery of others, for their sins committed in flesh and blood; and that he did not believe in the Mahometan and Papal

doctrine of a purgatory for some, to prepare them for immortality and eternal bliss.

In his argument in favour of the resurrection, he says; "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive—it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body—As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." We may here remark, 1st, It is fairly inferrible, from the apostle's entire silence on the subject of a judgment after the resurrection, that he did not believe it; and 2d, that the language which he used to represent the resurrection state excludes the doctrine of this judgment entirely. What state does the apostle say all shall be made alive in? Answer: in Christ, in incorruption, in glory, in power, in a spiritual body, in the image of the heavenly. Unless we allow the absurdity, that St. Paul believed, that incorruptible, glorious, heavenly beings, made alive in Christ, will be judged and sent to an endless state of torment, or to a purgatory of torment to prepare them for heaven, we must allow that he believed no such doctrine as is maintained by Mahomet, the Papal church, and by other christian denominations, respecting a hereafter judgment and future rewards and punishments.

Our limits will by no means allow us to present, in this discourse, all that the Apostle has written on our main subject, but we may be favoured with several more passages, which are conclusive. In his epistle to the Galatians, he refers to the promise which Almighty God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See chapter 3d. "And the scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." Again, Ephesians i. 9, 10. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to

his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself ; that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him." Philippians ii. 9, 10, 11. " Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him; and given him a name which is above every name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Col. i. 19, 20. " For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell ; and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; by him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

As it is necessary here to close the testimony, on which we rest the proposition, that St. Paul was a believer in, and a preacher of the glorious doctrine of universal salvation, your speaker begs the privilege of assuring his christian friends, that he has not, in any instance, quoted the testimony of the apostle, with a design to misapply such testimony, or to give it any false colouring ; and he is perfectly satisfied that whoever will, with suitable candor, examine all these quotations, in their connexions, will come to the conclusion, which has been vindicated in this discourse. And while having in view the never-failing source of comfort and consolation, presented us in this faith ; and being fully satisfied of its indispensable utility in the emendation of the morals of society, he closes with the words of the apostle. " Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

SERMON XV.

JACOB'S LADDER.

DELIVERED IN PROVIDENCE, R. I., NOVEMBER 20, 1822.

GENESIS XXVIII. 17.

"How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God,
and this is the gate of Heaven."

WITH confidence in the parental blessing, and in obedience to his Father's command, the father of the twelve tribes journeyed from the habitation of Isaac in Bersheba, in the land of promise, to Haran. In a temperate climate, as the sun went down, and the shades of night and the fatigues of the journey invited him to rest, he sought no lodging but the earth, no pillow but the stones of the place. While quiet repose refreshed his wearied frame, celestial visions replenished his longing mind with the clearest manifestations of divine truth. "He dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac : the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed ; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth ; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south ; and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest,

and will bring thee again into this land, for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The attention of the hearer is now invited to the consideration of this question ; What is it that constitutes any place the house of God, and the gate of heaven ?

We shall answer first in the negative. A house designed for public worship, ever so wisely planned and nicely executed in every part, according to the best rules and models of architecture ; constructed on the most convenient and accommodating plan possible to be devised ; ornamented in the most rich and costly manner ; adorned with representations of saints and angels, of the ever-blessed Saviour of the world, in all the variety of his character, from the manger to the cross, and from the cross to his Father's right hand in glory ; and with the awful name, **JEHOVAH**, in broad letters of gold, conspicuously stationed, so as to strike the eye of every worshipper at the same moment, would by no means constitute the place the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

Call a solemn assembly for the purpose of dedicating the house, with all its furniture and ornaments, to the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, and let this be done in the most devout manner, and still the place may remain neither the house of God, nor the gate of heaven.

Proceed still further ; get a clergyman of the brightest endowments ; of great genius, brilliant abilities, extensive acquirements, a profound student, a sound divine, according to strict orthodoxy, possessed of the most charming eloquence, and let him officiate in the house dedicated to God, according to all the injunctions of his office, all does not

constitute the place the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

None of the things which have been mentioned distinguished the place where the father of the twelve tribes reposed, where he saw the vision of God, which place he said was dreadful, none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. Here had been no designs of architecture drawn, the hand of no artist had laboured, no stately dome had been raised here for the worship of God, no altar had been erected, no priest had kindled the holy fire, no bleeding lamb had been offered for sacrifice. It was on the earth that the patriarch reclined, the rude stones of the place were his pillow. This was the dreadful place which he called none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven; and that which constituted it so was,

1st. The special presence of God. Jacob said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not."

2d. A ladder set upon the earth, whose top reaches to heaven, on which the angels of God ascend and descend.

3d. A divine manifestation of the covenant of promise, which God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And,

4th. The testimony of the divine Being, that he would keep the patriarch in all places whither he should go, and never leave him nor forsake him, until he had fulfilled his promise.

The ladder which Jacob saw, reaching from earth to heaven, on which the angels of God ascended and descended, was a representation of the Messiah or Christ. Jesus said to Nathaniel; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man." This ladder may be very justly styled "the gate of heaven," for it reaches from earth to heaven, and is a passage-way from one to the other. Jesus says; "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Again;

"I am the door of the sheep." Again ; " No man cometh to the Father but by me."

In order to bring our general subject into so small a compass as to be most easily comprehended at one view, we may say, that the house of God consists of his family, his laws, his government, the provisions which are necessary for food and raiment ; and the gate of heaven is Christ and his doctrine, which is the way, the truth, and the life. Wherever our heavenly Father is pleased to make a manifestation of these his glories, there is the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

God's family, according to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, consists of all the nations, all the families, and all the kindreds of the earth. Man, wherever he is found, is the offspring of God. Let his condition be what it may, he is the offspring of God. From the most profound and enlightened philosopher, to the most rude and uncultivated, yea, even to the idiot ; from the saint whose faith explores the glory of an immortal state, and whose bosom burns with the celestial fire of divine, unbounded charity, down to the most stupid unbeliever, who, destitute of charity, feels no affection but for himself, and whose god is his sensual passions, all are the offspring of an universal Parent, who is God over all blessed for evermore. " Have we not all one father ; hath not one God created us ?" This sacred text supposes that God is the Father of all whom he created.

That for which we have here contended is fully approved and confirmed by the acknowledged fact, that all men are equally amenable to the laws and government of the supreme. If any are disposed to deny that all men are the children of God, if they at all regard consistency, they must also deny that all are accountable to his laws. The laws of a parent extend no farther than to his children ; his neighbour has a right to control his own offspring. What we here state is no more than is

argued by the Apostle of the Gentiles, who, speaking to the Jews, says ; " For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves ; which shows the work of the law written in the heart, their conscience also bearing them witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." The law which our Father in heaven has seen fit to enjoin on all his moral offspring, is clearly understood by the light of the gospel to be, love to God and love to man. The divine teacher so explains the law and the prophets, and plainly shows, that whoever comes short of loving his neighbour as himself, is a delinquent.

This law of love is the law of God's house. It is like himself, unchangeable ; it cannot be repealed, because a better one cannot be enacted in its stead. This law is the divine nature of our Father in heaven. " God is love." This constitutes the order of his house ; without this law, there could be no order, no harmony, no security, and of course no happiness.

In a family government there are not only commandments enjoined, but there is what is called discipline, which consists in due rewards and punishments, according to the obedience and disobedience of those who are its subjects.

Discipline, administered by an imperfect being, such as an earthly father, must be imperfect, though it may be well intended ; but the discipline of our heavenly Father is not only perfectly good, as it respects design, but it is equally perfect in its administration and effects.

On the subject of obedience I wish to be particular, that you may be able to correct what has been erroneously reported, concerning our general sentiment ; for many have said, that we do not believe in the necessity of obedience to the commands of God in order to introduce us to happiness.

Such is the wisdom of the divine government.

that those rewards which are designed to incite to obedience and faithfulness, stand in such necessary connection with duty, that the reward is a fruit, as naturally produced by it, as the fruit of a natural tree is necessarily produced by it. Therefore it is seen at once that all the obedience which belongs to the house of God is the gate of heaven. That is, it leads into heaven. "For the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "In keeping the commandments is great reward." Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life ; and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Will you say, the speaker makes a very great mistake, by supposing that we are to enter heaven by keeping the commandments of God ? And will you furthermore say, that he has forgotten that the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, is Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life ; and on whom the angels of God are ascending and descending ? No ; he has not forgotten these things, nor is he sensible of making any mistake in supposing that we must enter in through the gates into the city, and have right to the tree of life, by doing the commandments of God ; for, if the kingdom of heaven is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and if this peace is in loving the law of God, let me ask, how can Jesus, or all the angels of God, who ascend and descend on him, get a soul into heaven, without that soul's obedience unto righteousness ? How then, you will ask, is Jesus our Saviour ? How is he the gate of heaven ? Or how is he the way, the truth, and the life ? Reply : Jesus is our Saviour, because he saves us from our sins ; he is the gate of heaven, because by walking in him we enter into heaven ; and he is the way, because he is a perfect pattern of obedience. The blessed Redeemer explains the

whole matter in a few words ; let us hear them with attention, for they are the words of eternal life. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ; take my yoke upon you, learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Shall we reply to this language of Jesus, and say to him ; If you are our Saviour, why do you require us to save ourselves ? If you are the gate of heaven, why do you not place us in its enjoyments ? By such a reply should we not plainly show that we think that the kingdom of heaven may be enjoyed without righteousness ? But the kingdom of heaven is righteousness. Therefore, whoever wants heaven, and yet does not desire righteousness, is in love of that for heaven which he is already in possession of, which is sin, condemnation, and death. Wisdom says ; "All they that hate me love death."

Will you now object to this reasoning and say, that it renders salvation uncertain ; by resting it on the obedience of man ? Will you say that our arguments go to prove, that unless we come to Christ we never shall be benefited by him ? And if we do not learn of him, we shall never find rest to our souls ? You feel certain that such conclusions must derive from what we have so plainly proved from the testimony of truth. You reply, most certainly these conclusions must follow. Why then, my dear hearers, do we not read these conclusions drawn from the passages which establish our premises ? Why did not the Saviour say ; But he who will not come unto me, and learn of me, and take my yoke upon him, shall never find rest to his soul ? It is generally believed and argued, that this conclusion is necessarily implied in all such scriptures, and perhaps many of you may now think the inference suggested is a necessary result of the passage quoted ; but let us listen to the testimony of Jesus still further ; "And I, if I

be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. And him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

My Christian Brethren, will any of you contend that a real, true manifestation of the blessed Saviour, can fail of drawing the soul to him? You who love his name, who feel his grace, I ask you, can you believe that there is one soul in the vast family of man, that could see the divine beauty of the Redeemer, and not love him? Dr. Watts, who was often led to sing the true honour of Jesus, says;

"Did all the world my Saviour know,
Then all the world would love him too."

Now what occasion had Jesus to draw the conclusions which we have noticed? If he had determined to draw all men to himself, he certainly had determined to give rest to all men, for he promises rest to all who come to him.

In drawing all men to himself, Jesus is the gate of heaven, he is the way, the truth, and the life, he is the Lord our righteousness. Observe his words—"I will draw all men unto me." Such are the powers exerted in the gospel of Christ as ensure the gathering together in one all things in Jesus.

As we have spoken of the reward of well doing, as a necessary ingredient in the government of the house of God, it may be expected that something will be suggested concerning that retribution which, in the order of God's house, is inflicted on the disobedient. Respecting this subject too, I have occasion to be particular, because it is erroneously reported of us, that we do not believe that sin is punished.

Observe then, with caution, that all the punishments of which we have information in the word of God, are the necessary chastisements which belong to the government of his house; and as they belong to the house of God, they are the gate of heaven. "Now, no chastisement, for the present,

seemeth joyous, but grievous ; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those who are exercised thereby." Again ; " If ye were without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Now says the hearer, the speaker has certainly contradicted himself ; for he says, Jesus is the gate of heaven, and he says also that chastisement is the gate of heaven ! Reply : Jesus, who is the gate of heaven, who is the Lord our righteousness, who is the way, the truth, and the life, who says, I will draw all men unto me, says, likewise, that he will reward every man according to his work. He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. But how does it become the Saviour to have the disobedient beaten with many stripes ? Answer : in order to make them obedient. This brings them to him and to rest.

Let us now notice the provisions which the house of God affords for his numerous family. We can understand this by adverting to the promise which the Lord made to Jacob at the time to which our text directs us—" Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth ; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south ; and in thee and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This is the covenant which God made with Abraham and Isaac. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the promised seed, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Here again, we find the house of God and the gate of heaven. Jesus is said to be God's covenant of the people, and a light to the Gentiles. All that we have proved to belong to the family of God, are here, in this covenant, provided for in the most ample manner.

Now wherever it pleases God to make known to the heirs of salvation, this divine covenant, this promise concerning all the families of the earth ; wherever he makes a display of Jesus the

promised seed, who is the Lord our righteousness, and who is our peace, there is the house of God and the gate of heaven.

Let the space, locally speaking, be great or small, it is large enough and none too large for this house of God. In your hearts, my brethren, if you love God, and your neighbours as yourselves, there is room enough for this house of God, in which there are provisions for all the families of the earth ; yes, and room enough too for all nations to meet together and feast for ever on the bread of life. Jesus says ; "I am the bread of life ; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." This divine truth is Christ in you the hope of glory. How widely he spreads his arms, how affectionately he cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and you that have no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." This is the language and desire of every true believer in Jesus.

Do you ask your humble servant where he finds the evidences that there are grace, mercy and truth for all men ? He replies, he finds them in the house of God ; they are in the covenant which our Father in heaven made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ; they are in Christ who is this covenant ; they are in every believer's heart, where Christ the hope of glory resides.

But says the hearer ; I believe in Christ, but I have not the evidence that all men are the subjects of his grace. We must say you are under a mistake. You have this evidence if you truly love God ; for if you love him you love all men, and this love testifies that all men are its object, and you are under the necessity of contradicting this testimony of divine love in your own souls, in order to maintain your creed. And we furthermore say, that until you believe in a doctrine of grace which will comprehend all men, you will not believe in one that comprehends yourselves.

Make your creed large enough for your own souls, and it will be large enough for all mankind.

Furthermore, these evidences appear, as "a cloud of witnesses," in the testimony of those angels, who ascend and descend on the Son of man. These renowned messengers, who have delivered to us the glad tidings of the gospel, comprehend all God's holy prophets since the world began, who have spoken of the coming of the Messiah, and of the glory which should follow, and the final restitution of all things; also, "the faithful and true witness" himself, and the Apostles whom he appointed to bear his name to all nations. And to all these may be added those celestial messengers, who have been permitted to taste the heavenly pleasure of announcing salvation to man.

There is such a peculiar harmony in all this testimony, delivered during many hundred years, and such a perfect agreement with the covenant of promise, which was announced to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the law by Moses, that it appears evident, that if Jacob, in vision, saw so bright a cloud of glory, it must have affected his physical system, ended his slumbers, and opened his eyes.

In accordance with this covenant of promise, which gave assurance that, in Jesus, all the nations, all the families, and all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed, the sweet singer of Israel testified as follows; "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name."

The evangelical Prophet, Isaiah, ascending Jacob's ladder to celestial heights of divine wisdom, and descending to earth with the glad tidings of universal favour, bears the following testimony; "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow

unto it—And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things—And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth ; for the Lord hath spoken it.”

The gracious design of the whole discipline of God's house is thus compendiously expressed by the prophet Jeremiah ; “For the Lord will not cast off for ever ; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”

Let these quotations from the prophets suffice as a sample of their whole testimony respecting our subject, and let us lend a moment's attention to the joyous declaration of celestial messengers. “Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord—And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” These angels ascended and descended on the Son of man ; and we may associate with the witness which they gave, the testimony of the apostles, a sample of which we may quote from St. Paul, who says ; “And we declare unto you good tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again—who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification—that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man—who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time—For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ; and

by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; by him I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven—For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life—For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Jesus said, as has been noticed, “I will draw all men unto me.” Why? Because they were all in his heart, his love comprehended the whole, and his divine determination and promise are, that he will never leave nor forsake them until he shall have fulfilled all his desire.

Jesus said, to the woman of Samaria, “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father—But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth—God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Christ is the truth, and he says, “I will draw all men unto me.” This is the truth, and wherever it is manifested, there is the house of God and the gate of heaven. This is our Father’s house where there is bread enough, and to spare.

The wisdom of this world has framed a very different doctrine from this which we have endeavoured to set before you at this time ; but it is not the house of God, nor is it the gate of heaven. It is the house that is built on the sand, and it is the wide gate that leadeth to destruction ; and many there be that go in thereat.

My Christian friends, you will permit me to speak the honest conviction of my heart, without giving offence.

As the doctrine of God, of love, of grace, of peace and of truth, the doctrine of Jesus, of life

and salvation, constitutes any place the house of God and the gate of heaven ; so a contrary doctrine, a doctrine of wrath, of everlasting condemnation, of hatred, and of every species of partiality, constitutes the synagogue of Satan, and the broad road to destruction.

In this state of destruction men are tormented day and night, with superstitious fears, with malicious spirits, with partial notions of divine goodness, with a persecuting disposition. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help found." In this doctrine for which we contend, there is a sovereign remedy for all the disorders of error. This love to God and mankind heals all our spiritual maladies. It casts out devils, it heals the leper, it opens the eyes of the blind, unstops deaf ears, and quickens the dead.

A manifestation of this glorious gospel of Jesus is the "mountain of the Lord's house, which he has established upon the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, unto which all nations are to flow. And this is the house of the Lord, in which those who are planted shall flourish, as in the courts of our God, and bring forth fruit in old age.

By the doctrine to which we have attended it appears, that in order to render any place the house of God, there must be a manifestation of the divine covenant, in which God has promised, that all the families of the earth shall be blessed ; there must be an exhibition of him and his doctrine, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

A manifestation of these divine things will constitute this covenant edifice, the fruit of your labours and expenses, the house of God and the gate of heaven. In the divine testimony, which we humbly and devoutly trust will be dispensed in this house, which we this day dedicate to God and his service, those who come hither to worship will find the laws, the covenant, and provisions which our Father in heaven has treasured up in

the gospel of Jesus Christ, for all people. And may it please the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, to grant to the builders of this house, to the worshippers therein, and especially to our Brother who may labour in holy things in this place, clear manifestations of the everlasting covenant, of Jesus its divine mediator, of the doctrine and spirit of his love, that this house may be to old and young, to male and female, none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. Here may the gentle reproofs of the spirit of truth seasonably check impure desires, and the admonitions of righteousness be successfully dispensed. May the faithful word of reconciliation, the doctrine of God our Saviour, drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the gentle dews upon the mown grass. Here may the church of God flourish, and those who hear and know the joyful sound of the gospel walk in the light of the divine countenance.

When prayer is offered up in this house, may it be offered in faith, and in conformity to the will of God ; and may it please our Father in heaven to hear and give assurances of peace.

SERMON XVI.

THE CHARACTER AND WORSHIP OF GOD.

DELIVERED IN CAMBRIDGE-PORT, ON WEDNESDAY, DEC. 18, 1822.

DEUTERONOMY XIV. 23.

"And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tythe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and of the firstlings of thy herds, and of thy flocks ; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always."

THE wisdom and goodness of God are clearly manifested in the religious institutions which owe their origin to divine authority. Man, being not only a religious, but also a social being, requires for the promotion of his rational happiness, religious institutions which, while they give a proper direction to devotion, at the same time make a wise and profitable improvement of his social feelings. Agreeably to these principles our indulgent and kind Creator gave to the people, whom he chose of all the nations of the earth, to preserve the knowledge and worship of the Divine Unity, such ordinances as were wonderfully calculated to remind them of his goodness, and at the same time to make the best possible use of all their social sympathies and affections.

If we duly contemplate a whole nation assembling, by divine command, and bringing together the tithes of the corn, the wine and the oil, with which a bountiful Providence had blessed them, together with the firstlings of their flocks, the increase of which they owed to the giver of every good and perfect gift, and in a most religious and

devout manner freely eating and drinking before the Lord, who not only requires but accepts this kind of devotion, we are led to view that Being, who is the object of these religious services, as one, who not only designs the best good of his creatures, but as one who employs the wisest means to promote his gracious designs. As often as these religious feasts occurred, the congregation of the commonwealth of Israel were privileged with an opportunity of realizing the goodness of the dispenser of all needful favours, and at the same time of cultivating and improving their acquaintance with each other, by which their social affections were reciprocated and strengthened.

In these solemn and joyful assemblies the twelve tribes would be led to forget any local prejudices, which an absence from each other had permitted to germinate, while the social affections would be called into action by all those natural means by which they are excited. But that which mostly contributed to unite that ancient people, and to render their religious convocations of special interest, was the condescension of the Divine Being in choosing to place his name among them.

In applying this subject to the happy occasion which has invited this solemn and joyful assembly, the following particulars will be briefly noticed.

1. The true doctrine of the divine name, the establishment of which in a certain place consecrates and renders it a proper place for religious assemblies and the solemn exercises of divine worship.

2. The true nature and spirit of devotion : and,

3. The design or object to be promoted by the worship of God.

The true doctrine of the divine name is thus expressed ; Exodus 34. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

It will not be necessary, at this time, and on this occasion, to be particular in setting forth the meaning of the words *Lord* and *God*, as it is well known these words signify the possessor and ruler of all things, who alone is worthy of supreme worship; but what seems to be of special importance is, that we understand the nature of those attributes which are attached to the words, *Lord God*, and their due agreement. The attribute of mercy is most strongly expressed as follows: "Merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Hear this, O sinful man, and let the goodness of God lead thee to repentance! Stronger language could not have been used to express God's fixed, unchangeable favour towards sinners. Here let it be distinctly understood, that the true name of the Lord God can never be separated from that divine mercy which forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. Any doctrine, therefore, which excludes the sinner from the favour and forgiveness of God is opposed to the name of the Lord, and renders any place unfit for the convocation of those, who would approach their God, thro' the mediation of Jesus, to obtain the remission of sin. The law dispensation and the temple worship were true figures of the gospel, and that spiritual worship of which the Saviour spake to the woman of Samaria. But the legal covenant made no provision for the worship of a people who had no sin; for they found the way to the sanctum sanctorum of their temple, where the sacred NAME was deposited, through the medium of that blood which made an atonement for their sins; nor is the spiritual worship of the true tabernacle ever offered until by the blood of the everlasting covenant the conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God.

But my christian brethren, let us, with a godly jealousy cautiously avoid the awful error; an error which has constituted a leading doctrine of an

apostatized church for ages, the error of supposing, that the atonement which a merciful God designed as a commendation of his love to man, was designed to reconcile himself to the objects of his grace. This error has defiled the christian sanctuary, polluted the name of the Father of Mercies, converted the God of boundless love into a Moloch, and the christian church into the mother of harlots, drunk with the blood of saints! Let it be kept in mind, that the name of the Lord is established by that doctrine which acknowledges him to be "merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

It is essential to the nature of God to forgive sin, for God is love, and love always forgives. This doctrine is clearly maintained by the commands of the Saviour, in which it is enjoined on us to forgive those who transgress against us; and we know this is the never failing dictate of the spirit of God within ourselves, when we are guided by it; and it should be deemed an egregious error for professed christians to allow themselves to believe that they are more ready to forgive the faults of their fellow sinners, than he is, whose grace hath forgiven them, and whose spirit alone can lead them to forgive others. We must furthermore consider it a fault to be lamented in the conduct of the pious of many denominations, that they fervently pray for the forgiveness of all men, while they pertinaciously maintain a creed that excludes millions of the subjects of their prayers from the mercy for which they ask!

But while we cautiously and gratefully maintain and defend the sacred NAME, as displayed in the doctrine of divine forgiveness, we must not forget the attribute of retributive justice, which is as strongly expressed in our quotation from Exodus 34th, as is that of mercy and forgiveness. The truly awful words in which this subject is expressed, are the following:—"And that will by no means clear the guilty." Hear these words, O sinful man,

and tremble! That God, whose all pervading eye beholds our very thoughts, and from whom our most secret designs cannot, for one moment be hid, has declared that it is essential to his very NAME, in no wise to clear the guilty! Nothing less can be meant by these words than that God will, without fail, in all instances, punish the transgressor according to his criminality. My friends, I beseech you to realize this fact, this solemn truth, that the Lord God, who is merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, will by no means clear the guilty; but will render to every man according to the fruit of his doing.

This doctrine of retributive justice will enable us to correct another injurious error, which has been imbibed in the christian church, and consists in a belief, that the wicked may spend many years in sin, and finally go clear of punishment, by repenting just before they die. This most injurious and demoralizing error has combined with itself another mistake, which is necessary to its support, which contends that God does not punish the sinner in this mortal state. By setting up and establishing these errors, the wisdom of this world has systematically profaned the NAME of the Lord. If during this mortal life sin be not punished, nor punished hereafter, if repented of before death, then it is evident that by means of repentance the Lord God clears the guilty; but he declares that he will by no means clear the guilty.

Another important error of the church, which the true doctrine of God's NAME, as manifested in his retributive justice, will assist us in correcting, is the supposition that Jesus Christ suffered the punishment due to the sins of an elected number of the human race, so that by means of his sufferings these sinners are cleared. Compare this with the divine declaration, "that he will by no means clear the guilty." According to the doctrine under consideration, none of those things, which have been held up as means by which sinners may be

saved from the punishment which they deserve, were ever designed for that purpose; for God says, he will by *no means* clear the guilty. The mediation of Christ, faith in him, nor the most sincere repentance was ever designed, by our Father in heaven, as means to clear the guilty.

If the opinion of christian doctors, who contend that sin is an infinite evil, and deserves an endless punishment, were true, then it would follow, of course, that God must either clear the guilty, or banish all men from his favour for ever. But this opinion is supported by no other authority than the precepts of men.

Is it asked, how the doctrine of the divine NAME, as manifested in the forgiveness of iniquity, and transgression, and sin, is reconciled with the manifestation of the same divine NAME, in the punishing of every transgressor, according to the turpitude of his guilt? God gives the answer—"If his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail—The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men—Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of all their distresses—Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work." God punishes the guilty as a father chastiseth his disobedient son, whom he loveth. My friends, the principle for which I am now contending is one on which all wise and good parents practice with their children. The tender

affections of a parent's heart are by no means inconsistent with that discipline, which carefully looks into every motive by which the heart of the child is actuated, and reproveth, rebukes and inflicts according to the degrees of guilt which an impartial investigation is able to discover.

According to the errors which professed christians have imbibed, they have considered themselves as the subjects of the divine forgiveness; but those who do not subscribe to their creed, they view as the guilty, whom the Lord will in no wise clear. Hence arises the complacency which they manifest while they talk of the righteous and the wicked. They are the righteous, and their neighbours are the wicked. They read the testimony, which informs us that the wicked shall be punished; but they are no otherwise affected by this, than as they are affected by some calamity which they are informed some people in a far country may experience; they do not so much as think of themselves. It is now, and among us, my christian brethren, the great and the main question, which is agitated against the doctrine of the divine impartiality, when and where are the wicked to be punished? Thousands and thousands are now standing by themselves and thanking God that they are not like other men; the case would be vastly different if we had that true sense of ourselves, which would lead us to smite our breasts and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The attributes of the divine NAME, which consecrated a place for religious devotion, under the legal economy, are, in the christian dispensation, manifested in the great apostle and high priest of our profession, to whom the eternal Father hath given a name which is above every name, that in his name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. But this name, as revealed in Jesus, displays a glory which was but faintly shadowed under the law; for Jesus "hath brought life and immor-

talities to light through the gospel." Hear this, O dying man, and lay hold of the hope which is set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the vail, where our forerunner hath for us entered.

A house of worship, dedicated to this name, which is above every name, and set open for the sacred ministry, which displays, in their most obvious and glorious light, the attribute of divine mercy in the forgiveness of iniquity, transgression and sin, and the justice of God, in a system of retribution, which renders to every man according to his doings; and which proclaims a risen and glorified Redeemer as the head of every man, in whom God has given to all men life and immortality, is a proper place for a christian assembly to feast on the fruits of the spirit, and to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise.

2dly. The true nature and spirit of devotion next claims our particular attention.

It seems reasonable to suppose, that the feast set forth in our text is a suitable figure to represent the true nature and spirit of christian worship.

Almighty God abundantly blessed his people in the fruits of their lands, giving them corn, oil and wine, and multiplied their flocks and herds; and he required of them that they should honour him by collecting the tithes of his bountiful providence, and bringing them together to the place where he established his name, and there eat these good things before the Lord. Thus the acceptable worship of God consisted in feasting his people on the good gifts which he had bestowed upon them. The christian, who worships God in spirit and in truth, well knows the application of this figure. Almighty God blesses his church with the abundant incomes of the fruits of his spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance, and with these fruits he requires us to honour him in our de-

votions. It was not to make the Lord kind to his people that they were directed to feast, with joy and gladness, before him; but it was because he had already blessed them, and because this feast itself was one of the greatest blessings they enjoyed. Thus it is with the christian congregation; we worship God in spirit and in truth, not expecting thereby to induce our bountiful Father in heaven to bestow on us his favours, but because we already enjoy them, and because the solemn exercises of devotion constitute our most exquisite pleasures. Nor do we, when guided by the spirit of truth, vainly offer to the Lord our devotions, expecting thereby to pacify his wrath and disarm his vengeance, which a disordered imagination supposes are burning against us; but realizing the true doctrine of the divine name, we offer our grateful devotions to him, who is gracious and merciful, who forgives our iniquities, transgression and sin, through the mediation of him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Our heavenly Father requires nothing of us, but for our own comfort and edification; and as it could not be well pleasing to one of us, who is a father, to see his children approach his table with horror, with dread, with fear and trembling, and eat and drink for no other purpose than to appease his wrath, so it cannot be consistent with the divine spirit, for us to adhere to those sentiments which induce devotions corresponding with such horrible fears.

The entertaining exercises of that religion which is well pleasing to God, are represented in the scriptures by several emblems which are worthy of our careful notice. Looking forward to the day of the Messiah's grace, the prophet Isaiah, represented the sentiments of divine truth as follows; "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast." It is evident that the gospel dispensation was in the prophet's mind,

when he delivered this testimony, for if his views had been limited by the separating wall which divided the Jews and the Gentiles, the feast would have been made for Jew, but not for Gentile. But Jesus hath broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, that of the twain he might make, in himself, one new man.

A feast made by our heavenly Father for all people cannot be designed to reconcile him who makes the feast to those for whom it is made; nor can this feast be composed of sentiments which exclude any from its blessings. The same prophet, stimulated by the quickening energies of the nourishing qualities of this feast, exclaims as follows; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

As other emblems of this divine repast, the same prophet speaks of rivers of waters in dry places, streams in deserts, and pools in parched ground. All these beautiful representations are realized in Jesus, who declared himself to be the bread of God, which came down from heaven to give life to the world; and who said that the water which he should give should so satisfy, that those who drank of it should never thirst.

In view of Jesus, in this extensive character, we understand his testimony, in which he says; "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me;" in which declaration he speaks of the fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, who said: "And it shall come to pass, in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it."

The spirit of the christian religion, and that

which leads the devotions of the sanctuary, is unfeigned gratitude to our merciful Father in heaven, who graciously forgives our iniquities, transgressions and sins; and who never fails to administer those salutary chastisements, which, in his hand, are means of grace, mercy and peace; and who has endowed his holy child Jesus with power to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel; and a lively active benevolence towards all mankind, as the offspring of our universal Parent, who is equally good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. Under the influence of this spirit, and in the enjoyment of this feast, which God hath made in Sion for all people, a christian assembly presents, in the exercises of devotion, the most pleasing and delightful entertainment that our imagination can conceive.

Where parents and children, neighbours and friends, the old and young, assemble to confess their sins and realize the mercy of a pardoning Redeemer, to offer prayers in faith for all needed favours, to feast their hopes with the bright prospect of immortal glory, and to offer anthems of praise to the giver of every good and perfect gift; while all the social affections are warmed and strengthened, we may justly call such a place an heavenly place in Christ Jesus. Of such a place, the pious Watts, expressing the sentiment of the sweet singer of Israel, says;

"I've seen thy glory and thy power
Through all thy temple shine:
My God, repeat that heavenly hour,
That vision so divine

Not all the blessings of a feast
Can please my soul so well,
As when thy richer grace I taste,
And in thy presence dwell."

3dly. We are to speak of the design or object to be promoted by the public worship of God.

This is definitely expressed in the last member of our text, as follows: "That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always."

In order to obtain correct views of this most important subject, it seems necessary in the first place to understand what is meant by the fear of the Lord. This fear is not that slavish dread, which too many deluded minds entertain, by erroneously supposing that our heavenly Father is a tyrant, destitute of that goodness, which renders him the proper object of our supreme love and confidence ; but it is that fear which love and confidence produce in the mind. We who are parents ought to understand this principle perfectly ; for without it, it is impossible to govern our offspring to their advantage. If our children are taught to fear to disobey us, because they realize our love and affection for them, their fear will be a safe defence against transgression, while at the same time it is both honourable and pleasing to us. But what parent would wish to see the dear objects of his affections, filled with a slavish fear, standing and trembling, as if their lives were every moment in danger, from the uplifted hand of his vindictive vengeance ?

The Apostle John has very justly disposed of this kind of fear, by informing us, that he that feareth is not made perfect in love, and that love casteth out fear. But love does not cast out the fear of the Lord, but induces it. This is that fear of the Lord, which the wise man said is the beginning of wisdom, and which he further describes as follows : "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."

Too many misguided souls have erroneously mistaken this subject, and preposterously supposed that they were exercised with the true fear of the Lord, while all they feared was what their kindest benefactor might do to them ! They learn to dread and to hate what they are taught to fear that God may do to them ; but they neglect to learn the true fear of the Lord, which is to hate evil.

Having this rational and scriptural understanding of what the fear of the Lord is, let us next ob-

serve that this fear may be learned by a due attention to the ordinances of christian devotion.

Mankind are naturally as capable of learning to fear and love God as they are to learn any science whatever. Let youth accompany their parents to the sanctuary of devotion, and let the true doctrine of the divine name be set forth in the light of the gospel of our Redeemer; let the odious nature of iniquity, transgression and sin be undisguisedly set before them; let the tongue of deceit and temptation, which endeavours to persuade the simple, that stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant, be silenced, and its folly exposed; let the loveliness of virtue and the true fear of the Lord be presented to the understanding; and let this be practised continually, and youth will learn, and the scripture which saith; "They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall bring forth fruit in old age," will be abundantly verified.

Christian friends and brethren who have cheerfully and willingly offered of your substance to erect this beautiful and convenient house for the public worship of our common Father in heaven, may I be indulged, not only in my own behalf, but in behalf of my ministering brethren, to congratulate you, for the good success, which has attended your laudable and praiseworthy exertions. Our eyes have been towards you, while our prayers have ascended to him, without whose aid, they that build the house labour in vain. And this day brings us to the mutual enjoyment of reciprocating our best and most refined affections, while bowing before the sacred name, and dedicating this fruit of your labours and expenses as a nursery for your families and the rising generation, in the wisdom, love, knowledge and true fear of the Lord.

Brethren, may all your hopes be realized, and may the ministry of reconciliation prosper within these walls, to the honour of God, and to the comfort of multitudes for many generations to come.

SERMON XVII.

THE INSTABILITY OF ERROR, AND THE STABILITY OF TRUTH.

DELIVERED IN HARTFORD, CONN., AUGUST 18, 1824.

HAGGAI, II. 6, 7.

"For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author presents us with the true sense and proper application of these words of the prophet:—"Now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

The bringing in, and setting up of the blessed kingdom of gospel grace and peace in the world, must necessarily be preceded by the removing of all such political and religious establishments as naturally oppose the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, by holding mankind in ignorance and slavery. This work is that which shakes not only earth but heaven. It crumbles to dust the proudest monuments of human wisdom and power, and prostrates the loftiness of spiritual wickedness, in high places.

In those prophetic visions which are recorded in Daniel, those empires which were represented by the splendid image, whose brightness was excel-

lent, and whose form was terrible, and whose solidity and firmness were signified by gold, silver, brass and iron, became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, before the all-conquering power of that Stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands ; and while those became shaken and removed, this subduing Stone, though a "rock of offence," to the kings of the earth, and a stumbling provocation to priestcraft, became an extended "mountain, and filled the whole earth."

These representations, varied in vision, were signified to the same Prophet by the entire abolition of the four great monarchies, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian and the Roman, and the setting up of the kingdom and dominion of the Saviour, to which all nations shall yield perpetual obedience, according to what is recorded in his 7th chapter.

The Prophet Isaiah, in his 9th chapter, gives to the people that walked in darkness, and that dwelt in the shadow of death, a great light ; breaks the yoke of oppression, and says, "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood ; but this shall be with a burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born : unto us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this."

In love to the human race, and in compassion for the miseries of mankind, "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," from those inhuman oppressions and tormenting deceptions, which were practiced on the weak and defenceless, by the collusion of kingcraft and priestcraft, the elements of which compose the earth and the heav-

ens which are to be shaken, as things which are contrived and made by the wisdom and power of this world, which are foolishness and weakness with God.

The shaking of nations, the convulsions of kingdoms, the confusion and divisions which characterized doctrines and the ministers of religion, at that eventful period when the kingdom of the Redeemer was set up in the world, together with the glory of the gospel day, may be regarded as the fulfilment of the words of the Prophet, which we have chosen to lead our reflections on this occasion.

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed, and to restore the true worship ; and it was for the encouragement of this good work, that this prophecy was delivered. The desire of all nations which was promised, and the glory which was to fill that house, were the Messiah and the doctrine of his grace.

The falling away of the Christian Church, the corruptions of its doctrines by the inventions of an ignorant, superstitious priesthood, sanctioned by the authority of Synods and Councils, having introduced the man of sin into the Temple of God, who has for ages been worshipped as God, the glory which Jesus manifested departed, and the darkness of papal errors and abominations have succeeded.

But the reign of the beast may be said to have come to an end ; the true testimony is received, and God is now carrying on the work of shaking earth and heaven, removing those things which are shaken, as things which men have made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. The desire of all nations is advancing to enter the Christian Sanctuary, and God is about to fill the same with glory.

Having seen the true application of our subject, and also how it is accommodated to our own times,

we shall next proceed to an examination and an illustration of such particulars as may be deemed proper on the present very important and joyful occasion. And,

1st. Let us enquire concerning those things which may be shaken ; show that these are things which men have made ; and contemplate their removal.

Though it is not deemed proper on this occasion, to dwell much on the iniquitous schemes and oppressive rule of despotic governments, by which the great mass of mankind has been kept in slavery, yet as such government is, without question, one of those things which may, and must be shaken and finally removed, that the permanent rights of man, which are established in the law of our common nature, may remain, we may safely calculate on the final and entire demolition of all such power and authority, so that wherever law and government shall exist, the people at large shall contemplate them as their dearest rights, their safe defence, and not as their oppressors. Past events and our country's experience have furnished sufficient proof that the whole creed of monarchical doctrine is the wicked offspring of that wisdom which an inspired Apostle calls earthly, sensual, devilish ; and recent events in the political world have shown that the example which has been furnished by these United States, has had the effect already to shake the throne of despotism in other sections of the earth. Nor shall all the powers of earth combined, be able to withstand the majesty of truth and the light of reason until their glorious march shall have franchised the world.

Our labours may more particularly be directed to examine the elements which compose the erroneous creeds of Antichrist, and show that they are things which men have made, things that may be shaken and removed. But here we find ourselves presented with a mass of rubbish, whose incoherence produces confusion, in comparison with

which, the confusion of languages at Babel might seem like harmony.

A God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, is supposed to have ordained from all eternity, the everlasting happiness of a few of the human race, and the eternal misery of all the rest. Then in order to hide such abominable partiality and cruelty, the just and good Creator is represented as furnishing a tempter, whose business was to seduce our first parents, in the garden, and lead them to the commission of one crime, which should justly condemn them and the whole human race to the pains of hell for ever. And in order that the original scheme of everlasting condemnation might find ample defence in the conduct of men, Almighty God gave them a sinful, depraved nature, and charged the account to Adam's transgression.

Here let us pause : Let us examine these elements of doctrine. Who invented the notion that our Creator ordained, from all eternity, some to everlasting life, and others to endless condemnation and death ? Is this proposition found in any part of divine Revelation ? When God made promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which promise certainly constituted the patriarchal faith, and is the divine monument which exhibits the wisdom, power and goodness of our heavenly Father, and is the foundation on which the New Testament builds the New-Jerusalem, the City of the living God, the promise was, that in them and in their seed, which is Christ, all the nations and all the families of the earth should be blessed. My christian friends, can any thing be more certain, than that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob never decreed that any portion of the human family should be for ever unblessed, for ever miserable ? When the Lord was about to destroy Sodom, he said, " Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ?" If

the Lord would not destroy Sodom, with a temporal destruction, without first acquainting his friend with his intention, is it reasonable to believe that he would not only hide from him his decree to destroy, eternally, far the greatest portion of mankind, but make him a promise to bless all mankind in him and in his seed, which is Christ? It is very true that Abraham would have had no occasion, in case the Lord had informed him of his eternal purpose to destroy for ever, the most of the human race, to ask the Lord whether he would "destroy the righteous with the wicked;" for such a purpose could have had no reference to any foresight of good or bad works in men.

To close this particular, we may safely conclude, that if God made the promise which we have noticed, to the fathers, men must have made this decree of election and reprobation, for the one is in direct opposition to the other; and it is very certain, that if the promise can neither be shaken nor removed, this doctrine, invented by man, will soon "pass away with a great noise." In fact, this partial notion, which consigns millions to endless wrath, has been so shaken already, as to admonish the clergy, that this child of their's will soon forsake them.

But suppose we admit this partial decree from all eternity, is there any sense in supposing that divine wisdom would have contrived a scheme to lead men into sin, in order to hold out the appearance of justice, in sending them to a state of misery, and at the same time communicate the knowledge of the whole affair to the clergy, for them to make it known to the whole world? I acknowledge, my friends, that it shocks my nerves, only to look at the abominable impiety of men's inventions; and I feel that we ought to be on our guard, that the uncleanness of the dead body might not adhere to ourselves. But let us not shrink from our research! There is one more abomination, which, for daring impiety, seems to distance every thing else. . . .

mean the notion, that our Creator, by an act of his almighty power, gave us a totally depraved nature, laid the blame of it to Adam, and is determined to punish us everlastingly for the same! We are not endeavouring to give these things any false colour to represent them as odious; no, any false colour would serve to hide their native deformity, and would give them a grace which they do not possess.

When we come to consider that such doctrines as have been noticed, have, for ages, been venerated as the true system of godliness, and that the Christian Church has been fed and nursed with such food, we cannot wonder at the blackness of her crimes, the wickedness of her frauds, or the murderous dispositions manifested by the parties into which these jargons have divided her.

There are many other inventions of men, which, if we had time, we might notice; but we must soon take our leave of this dark scene; not, however, without mentioning the mystery of an invented *Trinity*, which has been the means of sore contentions and bitter animosities in the Church. This self-contradictory doctrine of *three* infinite persons in but *one* infinite Being, has been so thoroughly shaken, that its warmest friends would now give it up, if they were not obliged to use this absurdity to maintain another; I mean the absurdity of an infinite, vicarious atonement. It is thought to be absolutely necessary that the sufferings of Christ should be considered as infinite, otherwise the notion of the infinite misery of any must be given up, which would ruin the kingdom of Satan at once!

Look, my friends, at this doctrine. God, from all eternity, determined who should be for ever happy, and who should be for ever miserable; and yet it is necessary that an infinite sacrifice should reconcile him to save any! And as if the more absurdities were multiplied, the better, it is maintained that those whom the Creator predestinated from all eternity, to misery, are to suffer this unspeakable condemnation for not believing what the

clergy have told them concerning the infinite atonement! And to complete the climax, it is contended that the everlasting salvation of those who were elected from all eternity, now depends on their being regenerated in this world, and having an entire new nature given them, which is ordinarily brought about by the *highly necessary* labours of learned ministers!

These, my friends, are a few of the things which men have made. They are things which will be shaken and removed, as fast as men come to use their reason assisted by divine Revelation. Many more injurious errors have been invented by the wisdom of this world, but those which have been mentioned, seem to form the main pillars on which the Temple of Antichrist has been built, and with which it must fall to ruins.

Taking our leave of those things which are to be removed, we may, in the next place, enter upon an inquiry infinitely more pleasing, and which will lead to discoveries calculated to fulfil the desire of every benevolent heart. The theme is "the desire of all nations." This is promised in our text: "The desire of all nations shall come."

But let us ask how this is possible? The nations are so opposed to each other, their religious superstitions so repugnant one to another, and such being the animosities which different creeds have engendered, can it be possible that their desires can all be concentrated in one point, and become satisfied with one thing? This is promised, and it is not too hard for the Lord to accomplish.

What do all nations mostly desire? Answer, LIGHT. "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." Jesus is "the light of the world, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Will any object and say, that men put darkness for light, and light for darkness? This proves two things in favour of my argument: let, it shows that the desire is so strong for light, that even when darkness is mistaken for it, the

mind is tenacious to hold it fast. And 2d, it proves that *more light* is needed. We may accuse the nations, if we please, of an aversion to the true light, and in return we may receive their recrimination; but if we travel to the ends of the earth, we shall never find the people who will say they do not desire the knowledge of divine truth. Light to those who are in darkness, is surely most desirable. "God is light," and he has given Jesus, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel."

When all the dark and dismal clouds of error and superstition shall have passed away, this eternal sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams, and be the fulness of universal desire.

It has already been noticed, that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, promised these fathers, that in their seed, which is Christ, all the nations and all the families of the earth should be blessed. This, most certainly is the desire of all nations. There certainly is not a nation so grossly ignorant; there is not a people on earth so bigoted in error, as not to desire to be blessed. There is not an individual who has become so contracted, however he may have excluded millions and millions of his fellow creatures from the sympathies of his bosom, and however he may have made his mad calculations to be blessed in heaven, in seeing his dearest earthly connexions in everlasting misery, who has no desire to be blessed himself. So strong is this desire in the most stupidly contracted soul, that he even hopes he shall be blessed for ever, and feel his bliss increase even by the torments of his own offspring.

Standing in the light of this subject, we can clearly understand, that the doctrines which have been generally held up for gospel, are altogether inadequate to the fulfilment of the promise made to the fathers, or the promise in our text. My friends, you may make the best you can of any doctrine which excludes any of the human family.

from the blessings of God's favour, and that doctrine is not the desire of all nations, nor can all nations and families of the earth be blessed in it. We must then find a doctrine in which all are blessed, then we have found the desire of all nations. This doctrine, this precious desire of all nations, is announced to the world in Jesus. The testimony of the Angel to the Shepherds, on the birth of this universal desire, is full evidence of this truth : "Fear not ; for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." How evidently does the desire of all nations appear in this angelic declaration,—“Great joy which shall be to all people.” Surely there is no nation, no people on earth, not a single individual, who has no desire for joy. We may search among the treasures of human inventions in vain to find a doctrine which contains great joy, which shall be to all people. But this we find in him whom the Father sent, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

We have the same blessed desire of all nations expressed in the heavenly doxology, sung by an innumerable multitude of the heavenly host, immediately after the angel had announced his glad tidings : “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Peace is the desire of every living, of every rational being. All want peace for themselves, and there are none who do not desire good will to themselves.

When the precious babe of Bethlehem was brought into the Temple for the accomplishment of the rights of the law, aged Simeon beheld this desire of all nations with transport, stretched out his feeble, withered arms, and clasping the heavenly treasure, said, “Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to lighten the Gen-

tiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Salvation is the desire of all nations ; this desire was then in the Temple, and this prophecy of Haggai was fulfilled. This was the desire of all nations, and this was the glory which filled the house of God.

Casting our eyes round on this newly erected Sanctuary, which indicates so much in commendation of the zeal and liberality of those who built it, and realizing at the same time, that it was their intention to dedicate it to the worship of the God of Abraham, who promised to bless all the families of the earth in Christ, fervent desires arise in our devotional hearts, that this house may be filled with that glory which is the desire of all nations.

My brethren in the Lord, had your souls been satisfied with those doctrines which men have invented, creeds which, so far from being the desire of all nations, are not the desire even of those who believe and preach them, you would never have appropriated of your earthly substance to the raising of this house, but would have been striving with Ephraim to feed on wind, and with the wandering prodigal to satisfy yourselves with husks. But the bread of our heavenly Father's house has invited you to that "feast of fat things," which the Lord of hosts hath made unto all people.

The glory, which we trust will in future days, and for a long time to come, fill this house, is that pure and rational doctrine of Jesus Christ, which teaches the *unchangeable, impartial love of God to all men, the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting*. These divine truths are things which cannot be shaken, things which will for ever remain, when every invention of the wisdom of this world shall have vanished away. The evidences which support these most glorious and soul-rejoicing truths, shine with unfading lustre in the book of Nature, and also in that of Revelation. What learned Doctor would undertake to defend a partial creed by evidences adduced from the works of God ? Would he present his dark invention of eternal exclusion from

the divine favour to the glorious luminary of day, and ask his beams to witness and support its unmerciful cruelty? Every ray of light would admonish him of his impious arrogance, and eloquently defend the truth of impartial goodness. Should he appeal to the rains, which water the earth, to vindicate his partial scheme, they would inform him that Jesus has long since improved them in support of a contrary doctrine. Let him next solicit evidence from the rivers and fountains of water, or from other elements of material nature, they all, with one voice, testify that the Lord is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. He will carefully avoid the testimony of the parental affections, for they are loud in their remonstrance in his own bosom against his unmerciful creed, and will not consent to give to their hungry offspring a stone instead of bread, nor in room of a fish, a serpent. Nor will he now go to the scriptures to find evidence to exclude the ransomed of the Lord from redemption through his blood, for he is now aware that the scriptures testify of Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men, and is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and that it is recorded in their faithful testimony, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

My brethren, this is a joyful day to our hearts. We here witness the increase of that glorious cause, which some of you espoused many years ago, giving it the limited support which scanty circumstances then allowed. Yet in those days, you saw the glory of God, and were refreshed with the doctrine of his universal grace. Now what you have long desired is granted. You have broken forth on the right hand and on the left, you have lengthened your cords and strengthened your stakes; and this extensive, convenient house is completed, and dedicated to the worship of ALMIGHTY GOD, who has removed those things which are shaken, brought in that blessed doctrine which is the desire of all

hearts, and who will, we trust and fervently pray, fill this house with his glory for many years to come ; and here cause the horn of David to bud ; here bless Zion's provisions, and supply her poor with bread ; cloth her priests with salvation, and cause her saints to shout aloud for joy.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SPEECH OF THE DEAD.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF DEACON MOSES HALL

DELIVERED IN CHARLESTOWN, THE FIRST SABBATH IN AUG. 1826.

HEBREWS, XL 4.

“And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

IN this chapter St. Paul sets forth the power and unity of faith, and, in our text and its immediate connection, he suggests that Abel was enabled by the power of faith, to continue to speak, being dead.

As the apostle contrasted the works of Abel, which were the works of faith, with those of Cain, which were the works of unrighteousness, contending that the former spake although dead, we may justly infer that the latter also speaketh, though dead, but of facts as different from those testified by Abel, as were his works from those of his brother, whom he slew.

Abel, though dead, has not ceased, since the day his blood was poured out on the ground, to testify that the righteousness of faith meekly and patiently submits to, and suffers persecution, from the wisdom and spirit of the flesh; while on the other hand, Cain, though dead, has continued, from the fatal hour in which he rose up against his brother and slew him, to testify that the wisdom, the spirit, the doctrine and religion of the flesh are armed

against the wisdom, the spirit, the doctrine and religion of God our Saviour.

By attending to these testimonies, which were borne by the two first who were born in the world, we are enabled to discern the qualities of true and false religion, and by infallible marks to distinguish them. That religion which incites its votary to persecute a brother, is unrighteousness; and that religion, which, in room of rendering evil for evil, leads its votary to love his enemy, to do good for evil, and when suffering even the extremities of persecution, to pray for him whose hand is raised against him, is the righteousness of faith, which overcometh the world.

Ever since the smoke ascended from the altar, and the divine acceptance was manifested, the bloody hand of persecution has been lifted up, and from the fatal spot of earth which drank the blood of Abel, has proudly marched round the world, that haggard monster of religion, whose devotions are sacrilege, and whose tender mercies are cruelty. While in the humblest form of self-abasement and non-resistance, the righteousness of faith hath endured both scoffs and scourges, responding to all the imprecations of infuriate enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The persecuted and the persecutor both live for a testimony, they both die for a testimony, and they both continue to speak, though dead.

These remarks are designed to present the hearer with some idea of the sense expressed by the apostle in our text.

We may now, by way of accommodation, apply this portion of scripture more generally, and allow it to direct us, to an enquiry, concerning what is said to us, by our fellow creatures, who are dead.

All who die continue to speak to the living. Their language is solemn, weighty and impressive. They all testify alike to some important facts, to which it is our wisdom seriously to attend.

1. They all inform us that we must soon follow them.

2. They tell us that their work, in the land of the living, is finished ; and whether it was completed as they, in their last moments, could have wished, or not, they now have no opportunity of making any alteration. By this, their united and undisputed testimony, they warn the living so to manage their time, so to economise their concerns, and so to act on the stage of life, that after they die, their memory may speak such a language to the living, as while living they could wish.

3. The dead say to the living, wherein you have discharged, with faithfulness, your duty to us, you have occasion of self-approbation and of conscious peace, of which no worldly adversity can ever deprive you ; but wherein you have come short of this duty, and wherein you have done us injustice, it is now too late to repair these wrongs. By this very solemn truth the living are admonished, by no means to add another instance of irreparable injustice or delinquency.

4. As the dead, who speak to the living, are of every age, and of every character, and of every attainment occupied by the living, they inform them that no age, no character or attainment, is security against the arrows of death.

5. The dead unite in their testimony to the living, that whatever imaginations they may indulge respecting the situation of man after death, and for whatever purposes such imaginations may be inculcated, no permission has been granted them to give to the living any information on the subject ; by which they direct the living to adhere to the revealed truths of the gospel, through which life and immortality are brought to light.

Concerning the foregoing particulars all the dead speak one language. In other respects, different characters speak to the living of different things, according to the various stations which they occupied in life, according to their various

situations in time, and according to what has been their allotments in the land of the living.

Parents, have we been called to part with our little ones? Has the icy hand of death snatched precious delights from our arms? Hark! They, being dead, speak to us. They tell us not to mourn for them, but for the millions of little ones, whose innocence will soon be tarnished with the corruptions of error and sin, who are destined to tread the thorny and thistley paths of human life, and to face the tempestuous storms which more or less beat on all who live. They remind us of their angel sweetness, they awaken a recollection of tender affections, and they bedew our hearts with the consoling assurance that they are heirs to all which was indicated by the lover and Saviour of the world, when he took little children in his arms and blessed them, and announced, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Have any been called to follow sons or daughters, of maturer years, to the house appointed for all the living? Have you, in anguish, seen those lovely eyes, which were the delight of your own, grow dim in death? Has that heart, which was once warm with filial affection, become cold and motionless? Is the crutch, on which you hoped to lean in old age, broken just as you begin to totter with infirmity? Does that slowly moving hearse bear the widow's son before her? And is this, her last earthly hope now gone? Are the sighs, which the winds are bearing away, the sighs of despair? Hark! The dead speak! They call the attention of their mourning parents to the testimony of the Saviour, in which he hath given assurance, that our heavenly Father's kindness is stronger and more pure than that which parents feel for their children. They remind the afflicted and bowed down with sorrow, that earthly affections are light, and but for a moment, when compared with that eternal weight of glory, which is reserved and secure among the unseen treasures

of eternity. Does not the speech of the dead remind the living not to lay up treasures on the earth, where moths and rusts corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but in heaven, that where their treasures are, there their heart may be also?

To surviving brothers and sisters the dead speak of important and tender things. They call on them duly to regard the places they have left, and as far as possible to fill the vacancy. Do aged parents survive? Let the children who live double their duty to them, that they may be comforted; let them multiply favours to each other that the absence of the deceased may be borne with less sorrow. Have they left companions or children? Here is an opportunity of continuing to do good to them who are here no more.

Companions, who mourn the loss of bosom friends, who look with pity on their fatherless or motherless children, should diligently listen to the voice of their departed companions. On the surviving companion and parent a double duty seems to devolve; and the dead seems to say to the living, the mutual love and affection, which we have equally and faithfully borne for these dear images of our own, are now wholly lodged in your breast, and the numerous duties towards them, which I once delighted to share with you, are now all your own. Let my presence remain with you; ask yourself, what would have been my will, concerning our offspring, had I continued with you and them, and I charge you, by my sacred memory, to leave no means in your power unapplied, which may promote their good, and contribute to make them wise, virtuous and happy.

Do children mourn the loss of kind and tender parents? Do they lament their orphan condition? Let them be calm, and listen to the speech of their parents from the silent mansions of death.

Dearly beloved children, although the parental bosom, which was once warm with the tenderest

affections, is now cold and lifeless, and can embrace you no more ; though those eyes, which once delighted to watch your steps, are dim in death ; though these hands, which were constantly busy for your protection and support, are lifeless in the grave, yet have you a parent in heaven, whose love can never grow cold, whose eye can never become dim, and whose hand is continually stretched out for your defence and support. That unseen, mysterious power, which gave existence, and planted parental love in the hearts of fathers and mothers, must be goodness itself. Look then, with confidence, to him, who clothes the grass and the lilly in more gorgeous dyes than are worn by princes, who will not fail to clothe the orphan. Look with confidence to him, who feeds the fowls of the air, who neither sow nor gather into barns, for he is your Father in heaven, who will much more feed you. Remember the counsels and advice, with the admonitions and warnings which you have heard from those lips which will speak no more, keep them near to your hearts, think of them when you retire to rest and when you arise from repose ; for thereby your parents will be present still, and continue to lend you aid.

The fathers, the patriots and heroes, who planted, reared and defended their country ; who devoted their talents and their many years to promote its interest, or early lost their lives in defence of its rights, continue, even from their hallowed tombs, to speak, in the ears of the living, a language which all understand. How many worthy names might I here mention, which are enrolled in our country's register, forming a brilliant constellation, surrounded by a bright halo of glory, giving light to our political path, and saying to their surviving children, keep sacred and inviolate the precious treasure which is the costly purchase of our patriotism and our blood ! Nor is the memory of recreant traitors less admonitory. By their everlasting infamy they warn the ambitious to

avoid their path, as they would the Bohon Upas.

All who have lived virtuously in the world, who have gone hence, to be here no more, call aloud to the living to walk in their steps; and all who have wallowed in vice admonish the living to shun their ways.

Thus do we hold communion with the dead; and have the opportunity of conversing with our friends, who are gone to the invisible world.

My friends, let us now, in a particular manner, attend to the speech of our father and brother, who has been recently removed by death, and on whose account this public service was appointed. He, being dead, yet speaketh. He speaks to that venerable sister, who is left to mourn the death of a kind and faithful husband, and to her his language is most soothing. He honours her with an entire approbation of her duty and faithfulness to him, and returns her his thanks for her unwearied attention, during his confinement and decline. He requests her, in room of indulging immoderate sorrow for him, to lay hold of that hope, which he so richly enjoyed while living, and which proved an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast, conducting him to Jesus within the vail.

He speaks to these surviving children in the language of a kind and provident father still. He requests them to remember all he has done for them, and to cherish gratitude to his memory. He invites them to examine his whole life, and carefully imitate his virtues. He calls their attention to the religion in which he lived, and to the blessed hope in which he died; saying, my beloved children, there is peace in believing and there is joy in the divine spirit. He warmly invites them to cultivate, among themselves, that tenderness and kindness, which he so much endeavoured to instil into their hearts, in their childhood, that the blessing, which the Lord commands on those who dwell together in unity, may rest upon them and on their respective families. And may I not here

add, he seems to say to his beloved children, forsake not, neglect not, that kind and faithful mother in her declining years.

This church and society, of which our departed brother was a most respectable and beloved member, will cautiously listen to what he, though dead, continues to speak to them. Of the faith which you profess, he was a steady and faithful defender. In devotion to it he cheerfully employed his worldly interest, his warmest affections, much of his study, a virtuous and exemplary life, a constant attention to public worship, and a fostering care of the ordinances of religion, in the office which he held in the church. By all these considerations he still speaks. By the large share of property which he held in this house, he requests you to be liberal in supporting an establishment which has long been dear to his faithful heart. By his constant attendance on public worship in this place, while his strength held out, he requests you not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, nor suffer slight concerns to detain you from public sabbath devotions. By your recollection of his venerable appearance in his wonted seat, he persuasively invites you not to desert your own; and by your memory of his peculiar attention to every part of divine service, he persuades you to observe the same attention.

To the opposers of the doctrine of universal salvation, through the divine mediation of Jesus Christ, our departed brother, though dead, yet speaketh. Yes, he will long continue to refute their reiterated objections, wherein they have so often said, that this doctrine tends to corrupt the morals of those who believe it, that it tends to a neglect of religion and its duties, and that it can afford no comfort, or assurance of divine favour, in the hour of death.

Soon after the establishment of the first Universalist meeting in Boston, our departed brother became a believer and an advocate of the doctrine,

and an officer in that church. Ever since that period, in which he renounced all notions of limited goodness and partial salvation, in which he embraced a belief in the universal goodness of our Father in Heaven, and the final salvation of all mankind, he has faithfully maintained his integrity ; and his whole life may be examined and found to be a refutation of the before named objections. As to his morals, if they are examined, in relation to his conduct as a husband, a father, a citizen, a man of business, it is confidently believed, that they would suffer but little, by a comparison with any example, which has been provided since the day of our Saviour. Where is the man of his acquaintance, who would dissent from what is here stated ? For nearly thirty years your servant has had the pleasure and satisfaction of an acquaintance with this dear friend. In all this time have I never known nor heard of the least fault in his moral character. Even the envenomed tongue of slander, which seems to delight in tarnishing that which it envies for its purity, I believe, has always viewed the character of which we speak too immaculate to receive a blot.—Long, I say, will this character speak in refutation of what has so often been asserted, that the faith which he professed tends to vice.

Nor is his religious character a less refutation of the objection, that the belief in the final holiness and happiness of the whole human family, tends to render men neglectful of religion and its duties. Of this fact all who have known him can bear ample testimony. And by this fact, he, being dead, yet speaketh. He invites the opposers of this blessed doctrine of “ peace on earth and good will towards men,” to consider his faithful and constant attention to the public worship of God, and to a fostering care of the concerns of the respective churches to which he has belonged, and in which he has officiated in a conspicuous character. He invites them to consider, candidly, the question,

wherein he has not performed his duty ? And also to consider the question, to what inducements can they refer this faithfulness but to the favourable influence which his faith had on his heart ?

As to the objection that our belief can administer no consolation, nor give assurance of the divine favour in the hour of death, our departed brother's testimony will for ever remain its entire refutation. In very many instances it has been reported, by the zealous enemies of our faith, that its believers have renounced it on the near approach of death, and endeavoured to find favour with God, by embracing a different creed. That such cases have ever occurred we have no good evidence ; and as to the instance which our departed brother has furnished, there are many witnesses, who can bear testimony to the triumphs of his faith.

A short time since, when I called to see him, when we both supposed it was the last time we should speak to each other this side the grave, he conversed freely on the subject of his belief in the salvation of all men. He seemed to feel desirous to give me and others to understand, that his mind was clouded with no doubts ; that his confidence in the unbounded goodness of our Heavenly Father remained unshaken. He was confident at that time that the day of his departure was at hand, and he expressed an entire willingness to go, and said that he had no desire to recover his strength, or again to walk abroad. He spoke to his son, who was present with me, of his approaching dissolution, with as much composure of mind as I ever heard him converse on any subject in his life. He gave particular directions where he would have his body laid, and expressed his wishes respecting his funeral, requesting me to attend it. And, taking me by the hand, with a smile which indicated heavenly peace of soul, said, " Brother Ballou, I firmly believe that I shall meet you again in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, where we shall part no more." Many happy moments had

we spent together, but this seemed to surpass them all. It was joy to my heart to witness the triumphs of his faith, and my prayer was that my last days might be like his.

Let me say to all who mourn on this occasion, we have more reason to rejoice than to sorrow. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Precious indeed must be so calm a death to all surviving friends. May he, who is the resurrection and the life, who has promised to swallow up death in victory, be, and for ever remain, our consolation, our hope, and our joy.

SERMON XIX.

THE NATURE AND REASONABLENESS OF DEVOTION.

DELIVERED IN DUXBURY, ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1826.

PSALMS, C. 8, 4, 5.

"Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

THE recognition of a supreme, intelligent Being, as the ruler and rightful owner of the universe, lies at the foundation of all rational devotion. The evidences proper to convince us of the existence of such a Being are entirely ample, and of a character perfectly adapted to our senses, through which medium they bring conviction to the understanding. To our sense of sight are presented unnumbered worlds, whose known motions, as well as stations, have such a relation to each other, as to convince the rational mind, that what may be termed order, does in reality exist throughout the universe. The regular changes of the various seasons of the year, which are but the known effects of the order just noticed, are sufficient proof, to a candid mind, that the natural world is under the control of a principle, which is both steady and sure in its influence. The regular routine of the several divisions of the day and of the night, is such kind of evidence in this case, as can, by no means, be refuted. The sun, the moon, the stars hold forth a language to intelligent beings, not to

be misunderstood, in which they bear testimony of the divine existence.

In order to arrive at the advantages, which result from our relation to the one Supreme, it is not necessary that we inquire into mysteries which are necessarily hidden. Philosophers may endeavour to determine of what substance the sun is composed, and in the fruitless attempt, they may weaken and even utterly destroy the power of vision; they may, in the utter darkness produced by their speculations, come to the preposterous conclusion, that there is no sun in the heavens! So, if we attempt to find out the "Almighty to perfection," we are at once lost in a maze of our own folly, and are liable to doubt the existence of what we are unable fully to analyze or comprehend. Were we able to subject the monarch of day to a chemical process, and again to restore that vast luminary to his present station and splendor, we have no reason to believe, that the advantages which we have always enjoyed from his light and heat would in the least be increased by our labours. So if we were able to demonstrate, on physical principles, the very substance of the divine Being, we have no reason to believe that the blessings which we receive from him would, by this, be increased.

That our views of the Supreme Being should be such as to induce a rational devotion, on moral principles, it is necessary that we acknowledge Him to be intelligent. For however so great and numerous the advantages may be, which we derive from him, unless we view them the effects of design, we can feel no moral obligation, can exercise no gratitude, can offer no praise, nor feel a moral accountability. The fruit, which is most pleasant and agreeable to our taste, excites in us no gratitude to the tree on which it grew, because we have no evidence that this fruit was thus adapted to our taste by any design of the tree; but the rational mind, being convinced that such won-

derful congruity, resulting in the most exquisite pleasure, must be the effect of design, and that this design must be in him who created the tree, who constituted the flavour of its fruit, and the taste of the eater, feels the weight of obligation, and exercises a rational gratitude to that infinite intelligence, which kindly regards the enjoyments of his creatures.

It is not, therefore, the simple existence of a supreme governor of the universe, viewed only as a governing principle, like the law of attraction in solid or gross bodies, which constitutes an object of rational devotion; nor is it the almightiness of that principle, nor its power to do us good or harm, which can call forth our worship; but it is the recognition of a benevolent, a compassionate design in our Creator, which always directs his omnipotence in such a course as cannot fail of the good intended, which calls our rational powers to devotional exercises.

The portion of scripture, which has been chosen to lead our religious contemplations, on the present joyful and happy occasion, very evidently justifies the foregoing remarks. The acknowledgment of God is the first thing mentioned and enjoined. The text then proceeds to inform us what God has done: "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." It then informs us that "we are his people and the sheep of his pasture." We are God's property, and are provided for and taken care of by him. On these principles, the devotion, which the text requires, seems evidently to depend. As it is a fact that there is a God; and as it is a fact that he hath made us, and that we did not make ourselves; and as it is a fact that we are his people, and are provided for and taken care of by him, as sheep are by a shepherd, we are required to "enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise;" we are required to "be thankful unto him, and to bless his name." The reasons which the text further renders for

his devotion are thus stated; "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

In improving this subject appropriately to the dedication of this house to the worship of the **ONE ONLY AND TRUE GOD**, special notice will be taken of the following particulars:

First. Important truths suggested by the facts that the divine Being made us, and that we did not make ourselves.

Secondly. A concise view of the reasons given in the text, why we should pay our devotions to our maker and preserver, and

Thirdly. The benefits arising from a faithful attention to these devotional duties.

First. If an almighty and infinitely wise Being created us, and if the Creator be himself morally good, it follows of course, that; whatever may be our nature and constitution, in relation to either natural or moral principles, they are what the Creator saw fit they should be, and what he made them, and that they are not opposed to his goodness. Whatever discrepance there may be between these self-evident facts and the common doctrine of man's native and entire depravity, in which the doctors of the church have found an utter aversion to God, and a fountain of unholiness, impurity and sin, it must be imputed to the perversion of human reason, and to that mental darkness which misguided the understanding in ages of superstition. It is far more reasonable to suppose, that the most learned, and even the most devout among men should err in understanding, than it is to believe, that, as the creatures of God, we possess any native properties which are in opposition to him.

Secondly. The fact that we were created by the divine Being, and not by ourselves, necessarily suggests, that in our constitution we are favoured with whatever unerring wisdom was able to devise for our benefit. Whatever is made partakes of the

skill of him who made it, and is a display of the wisdom of the maker. It therefore behoves us to entertain exalted and most respectful sentiments relative to our being and nature, that we may avoid the folly, too frequently practised, of dishonouring the Creator by lightly esteeming the works of his hands. If we are told that our argument partakes of pride and ostentation, and that it is hostile to that humility which becomes such dependent beings, we reply

Thirdly. The fact that God is our creator necessarily claims for him all the honour and all the praise for so glorious a work. So that the higher we exalt the creature, as to nature and constitution, the more we honour the author of our existence; and while we duly connect with the fact that God made us, the fact that we did not make ourselves, we shall understand that by entertaining exalted sentiments of the nature and constitution of the creature, we confess what we owe to our Creator, and the infinite obligations his goodness hath imposed upon us; which is that humility, not the affected humility which inflates the foolish pride of him who pretends it, but that genuine humility, which acknowledges the Creator's goodness, and the creature's dependence.

We shall proceed as was proposed,

Secondly. To take a concise view of the reasons given in the text why we should pay our devotions to our maker and preserver, and,

First. The first reason why we should worship, the supreme ruler and governor of the universe, which our text suggests, is, that he is our Creator. But as we have before observed, in order to call into action the powers of our minds in devotion to God, we must contemplate him as an intelligent Being, so it is necessary that we duly estimate the design of our Creator, in giving us existence; for it is certain that our devotion, being derived from the views which we entertain of God, must acquire its character from them.

Let us then consider the all-important question, for what purpose did our Creator give us existence? If we could believe that our existence was produced without design, we could feel no rational gratitude to that power which brought us into being for this undesigned act, even should our existence prove a most happy one. If we believe that our Creator designed our existence for the sole purpose of his own gratification, excluding entirely, as a motive in giving us being, any happiness or enjoyment which we should experience, however he might succeed in his exclusive design, or however happy we might chance to be, in order to gratify our Creator, who had no design in making us happy, but his own amusement, excluding all benevolence towards us, we could feel no more gratitude to him for all this, than we could if he had created us without any design; or no more than we feel towards the wind, when it refreshes us, without any design so to do.

Much less, if possible, could we feel grateful to our maker, if we should believe that he brought us into existence to glorify himself by enduring intense misery as long as he shall exist. Such a design would disparage the Creator, in the rational mind, infinitely more than to allow him no design at all.

Our doctors, therefore, who exert so much intellect, and employ so much learning and zeal to persuade us to be willing to endure endless suffering for the glory of God, may, with much propriety, be called on to show wherein their God is not an infinitely greater abomination than Moloch, or the crocodiles of Egypt.

Let us with impartial minds and cool deliberation, spend a moment in viewing this god, in contemplating his worship, and in observing the zeal of his ministers. This god gave his creatures existence, that they might glorify him for ever by enduring unspeakable torment. He has prepared every thing necessary to accomplish this design. He now calls on those wretched creatures to build

churches, in which to worship him, and to dedicate them to his *most sacred* service. He employs his ministers, and fires them with zeal, to persuade us to engage in this work of devotion ! How can we account for such stupidity ? If we could be so much deceived as to exercise gratitude to such a deity, as the exercise of gratitude is happiness, it would defeat the design of our misery ? If, therefore, those who are devoted to the service of this god would preserve consistency, it is high time they were persuading us to abandon all thoughts of devotion, and to give ourselves up entirely to the work, to which this god designed us, the work of blasphemy and the rack of torture !

If it be said that our doctors do not pretend that our Creator designed us all for everlasting woe, but that he has most graciously designed *some* for happiness for ever, we reply ; this alters not the disposition of the Creator. He would have designed us all for misery if he could have the more glorified himself thereby. It was not benevolence in him that prevented his appointing us all to a wretched eternity ; if it had been, such benevolence would have secured the whole human family from endless misery. Were some few of us persuaded, that we were of the number, who were, in the beginning, appointed unto everlasting happiness, it would be impossible for us to feel any real gratitude to our Creator on this account, so long as we allow, that there is no benevolence in him even towards those who are thus designed for happiness. Even to pretend to gratitude for such partiality, would, in a sense, make us partakers with this deity, of the ungracious, misanthropic principle at which humanity feels a disgust.

If after exploding those dishonourable opinions, respecting the design of our Creator, we should embrace such as represent him as impartially giving to all men an opportunity and means, whereby they can, if they wisely choose, render themselves for ever happy ; and yet allow, that millions will,

by means of their unavoidable imperfections, foolishly neglect both means and opportunity, and finally bring on themselves a state of suffering equal in duration and degree to that supposed before, and that the Creator knew all this when he first created mankind, we gain nothing by the shift ; and we greatly deceive ourselves if we believe that this scheme is at all better than the former. If the advocates of this last are disposed to contend for what they call free agency in man, they are advertised that our present inquiry asks for the design of the Creator in constituting in us such an agency ? If he knew when he made us and gave us such agency, that we should for ever ruin ourselves in the use of it, it is most absurd to pretend that he did not design our ruin.

We now see, that what has been called two schemes of doctrine for ages, is, in fact, but one ; and that it is one that utterly forbids the idea of devotion. And it is worthy of remark, that all the worship which has been inculcated on this erroneous doctrine, has been urged as a means of securing, rather than of acknowledging the divine favour. The Deity has been uniformly represented as a Being, whose good will might possibly be obtained by a cringing, fearful homage, extorted by his threatening vengeance. And to this doubtful end have the devotions of the people been directed.

The reasoning to which we have now attended, results in the conclusion, that the design of our Creator, in giving us an existence, was pure benevolence ; and that our existence was originally designed, by our Creator, for enjoyment.

Secondly. The remaining reasons, suggested by the text, why we should pay our devotions to the God who made us, will be found to corroborate our views concerning the benevolent design God had in giving us being. They are thus stated : " We are his people and the sheep of his pasture—For the Lord is good ; his mercy is everlasting ; and

his truth endureth to all generations." Let it be distinctly understood, that as the text urges us to the worship of God, rendering as a reason therefor, that we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture—that he is good ; that his mercy is everlasting, and that his truth endureth to all generations, it acknowledges, that if we were not his people, if we were not the sheep of his pasture ; if he were not good to us ; if he were not merciful, and if his truth did not endure, we should be under no obligation to worship him. This doctrine is not only the plain and simple doctrine of reason and common sense, but it is supported by the general tenour of scripture. In the inspired writings, we are constantly urged to the duties of devotion, because of the goodness, the tender mercy and faithfulness of God towards us.

When we contemplate the goodness of God to the human family, as a reason why we should be thankful in our devotions, and as the foundation for rendering praise to his holy name, we should realize that the more we circumscribe the divine goodness, the more, of course, we shall limit our gratitude and thanksgiving ; while on the other hand, the more we extend and exalt the divine benevolence, the higher will our gratitude arise. Here let the question be considered ; is there any danger of exalting the goodness of God too much, or of exciting in ourselves too much thankfulness ? Look abroad, through vast creation ; look to the heavens and to the earth ; consider the fruitful seasons, which fill our hearts with food and gladness, and let enlightened reason, free from the prejudices of limited creeds, say if any thing could be added to the divine economy, that would more recommend its goodness. Well did the sweet singer of Israel say ; " the Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." " We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

"As the good shepherd tends his *fleece* care,
 Seeks freshest pastures, and the purest air,
 Explores the lost, the wandering sheep directs,
 By day o'er sees them, and by night protects;
 The tender lambs he raises in his arms,
 Feeds from his hand, and in his bosom warms,"
 The kindly care of our Creator's grace,
 One fold entire, regards the human race,

For us he makes his sun to shine, for us he causes the rains to water the earth, for us do rivers flow, and for us do the winds breathe through the land. "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maidens."

Our text, in that it urges, as a reason why we should enter the consecrated courts with thanksgiving and praise; the fact that the divine mercy is everlasting, and that the truth of the Lord endureth to all generations, brings the glorious gospel of his beloved son to view; for it is in the gospel that the divine mercy and truth of our Creator are most conspicuously set forth to the praise of the divine name, and to the consummation of human happiness. The divine mercy, which is but another word for grace, is that modification of divine love, which delights in the forgiveness of our sins, and in the bestowment of all temporal and spiritual favours, which lie beyond the reach of our wisdom, prudence or exertions. This mercy is everlasting. St. Paul, to the Romans, has expressed it thus:—"Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." There are two qualities or attributes of the divine mercy, which particularly claim our attention, at this time. This mercy or grace of God is represented to be more extensive than sin. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." We are not informed how much more, but it abounded *much more*. And this mercy is everlasting.

Who then, let us solemnly ask, has a right to limit the divine mercy? Who is authorised to stand up boldly, and say to that blessed fountain, which is opened for sin and transgression, hither shalt thou come, and here shall thy flowings be stayed! Go, rude fanatic, and in thy wild, disordered zeal dry up the streams and fountains of water, command the clouds that they rain not on the earth, wither every green thing with thy blasting breath, but in the name of Jesus I beseech you not to restrain the flowings of the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for the remission of our sins!

The truth of God endureth to all generations. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The doctrine of Jesus is the truth of God which will for ever endure. Let us listen to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. To the enemies of God he preaches his love; "It hath been said to you, by them of old times, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust." This doctrine, of love to enemies, is the truth of God, which endureth to all generations; it is a refutation of all false doctrines, and is the way of holiness in which the way-faring man, though a fool, will not err.

Jesus says again, "I am the resurrection and the life," and St. Paul says, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Here again we have the truth of God, which endureth to all generations. Here is that blessed hope, which is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the vail, whither the fore runner is for us entered.

Thirdly. The benefits arising from a faithful

attention to the duties of devotion now claim our particular attention. Our brethren who oppose our general system of faith, have often asked us why we put ourselves to the trouble and expense of public devotion, if we believe as we profess, that our eternal salvation is secure in the divine favour already? We have now a suitable opportunity to reply, and this interesting, happy occasion seems to justify the attempt.

The better to have this subject clearly understood, it may be proper to define, not only how the question applies to us, but also how it represents those who ask it. On their part it is an acknowledgment that the duties of devotion are not, in themselves, a satisfaction and a delight; but that they are a burdensome expense and a painful trouble; yet for them they expect a reward hereafter, and that they will be reckoned into that final account, at the day of judgment, which is to decide for or against their eternal salvation. On the other hand, the question demands of us, why we are at all this expense and trouble, when we believe that our everlasting salvation is already secure in the gracious counsels of divine wisdom? We reply

First. Though we would be loth to accuse our brethren of hypocrisy, we are conscious to ourselves, that we should be found dealers in deceit, if we pretended to worship a being for fear of his wrath. To us it looks like saying to our maker, we profess to love you, we profess to worship you, we sing hymns to your praise; but we should do none of these things if it were not that we dread your vengeance! In such a case we are apprehensive that our conscience would demand of us, who had required this at our hands? To us it looks like the worship which was paid to the idol on the plains of Dura, and extorted by the terrors of a fiery furnace.

Secondly. As to the trouble of worshipping our heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we cannot

use such a phrase without a blush. When our nation's benefactor condescended to be our guest, did the people talk of the trouble of paying him respect? Did he hold a glittering sword over our land, which threatened our destruction if we refused to do him honour? No; nor was the cordial reception which welcomed him every where designed to gain his friendship, but was one spontaneous expression of genuine gratitude for invaluable services long since rendered. We claim the privilege of rendering to our maker, to the shepherd and bishop of our souls, to our Father in heaven, whose mercies we daily receive, on whose bounty we live, who has revealed his will in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we shall inherit eternal life, as his free, unpurchased, unmerited gift, the unfeigned homage of gratitude and praise. This is the most pleasing part of our duty on earth.

Thirdly. As to the expense of public worship, such as the building of convenient houses, supporting a public preacher, to declare the goodness of God, and to show us our duty, and other necessary expenses, these are all for our own accommodation and convenience, and we think our property as prudently vested in these, as in any other of our more private accommodations. We are not at the expense of houses to live in, because we expect to be repaid therefor in a future state; we do not labour for a comfortable living because we expect eternal salvation for so doing; we do it because we wish to live happily while we need such things as are thus procured.

We are persuaded that besides our present enjoyments in meeting together for the purpose of worshipping God, there are many advantages to society, growing out of these religious habits. It is a blessed privilege for parents to lead their children to the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and there comfortably seat them by their side, to hear the good things of the gospel proclaimed, the endearing character of our heavenly Father described in

lively colours, to listen to that blessed doctrine which teaches us, that although we must soon be separated by death, we shall be again united in that blessed immortality, where we shall part no more. This doctrine and these habits, will make an early and lasting impression on our children, and will endear to them these privileges which we delight to enjoy. The strongest and yet the softest bands of society are contracted at the altar of devotion.

The sanctuary is not only a school for instruction in religious faith, but is designed also as the guardian of morality. In short, no doctrine can be beneficial to society, that does not tend to purity of life; and the more the divine character is learned, the better it is understood, the more it will transform our hearts into its likeness. Institutions, customs, and habits, which contribute to this salutary end, are not only blessings to ourselves, but they are the richest inheritance that we can leave to posterity.

To conclude: Most cordial congratulations are tendered to the Society which has exerted itself in the laudable undertaking to accommodate itself with this convenient house, for the public worship of the ONE ONLY AND TRUE GOD. Sacred to this holy service may this desk, these seats, and that gallery for sacred music, remain. And may the people who worship here "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," That it may be said of them, "Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." And may they thus continue, until these courts shall be exchanged for that blessed immortality, which is brought to light through the gospel.

SERMON XX.

DUTIES OF A PREACHER.

DELIVERED IN CHARLESTOWN, MASS., JULY 11, 1837.

2 TIMOTHY, II. 15.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

IN whatever calling a man may engage, his first and major object should be to obtain the divine approbation. This truth might be illustrated and confirmed by many and various arguments; but its obvious character renders it unnecessary that much labour should be bestowed on the subject. A remark however may be admissible. Without pausing to define the origin of man's consciousness of moral duty and his accountability to God, this principle is of incalculable advantage, as it is ever active in giving profitable directions, which if followed, lead to the accomplishment of all the duties of our respective callings, whereby satisfaction and profit are yielded to all whom our labours concern, while we gain the richest reward which the severest toils can merit, the approbation of our own hearts and the approval of Heaven.

Though this remark does not apply exclusively to the calling of a christian pastor, yet we may allow that it applies to this subject in a very special manner.

As the weight of moral obligation must be determined, at least in some degree, by the extent of consequences likely to result from faithfulness or

unfaithfulness, the responsibility of a christian minister will not be found to fall much below that which belongs to any other station in society.

Before a man enters on any professional calling, it is necessary that he should render its duties as familiar to his mind as possible, that he may be able to determine whether the labours it requires are such as will be agreeable to his disposition. He, who has not a natural taste for the study of the science of jurisprudence would not be likely to succeed well in the practice of law ; and this rule is applicable to other professions. Nor indeed need we exclude it from the mechanic arts, merchandise or husbandry. The sacred profession which requires the entire devotion of all the abilities of him who engages in its labours, should not be repugnant to the natural temper and disposition, which will not fail to exercise an influence over such labours.

He, who engages in the work of the christian ministry, having duly settled all the questions, which are involved in the foregoing remarks, is admonished, by our text, to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We shall do well to compare the propriety of seeking the divine approbation with that of endeavouring to gain the applause of men.

1st. It is certain that the mind and will of God are perfectly agreeable to the unchangeable standard of right. If we can, therefore, succeed in approving ourselves to Him, we are certain that we are what we ought to be ; we are right. But our knowledge of man, derived from experience, from observation and from history, assures us that he is not always in the right. Man is liable to err, and to wander very far from the immutable standard of rectitude. To aim, therefore, to please men, is at least hazardous. If we succeed, it may be but a success in that which is wrong.

2dly. God being of one mind and unchangeable,

if we succeed in obtaining his approbation, we have only to persevere in the same way, and we please him for ever. He does not change, and to day disapprove what yesterday he required. But if we study ever so intensely and labour ever so much to please men, and even succeed to their full satisfaction ; though the desired applause and the toil earned smile of approbation be obtained, it may all be of but short duration, it may all vanish like a pleasing fancy, for they may so change as to be offended to-morrow with what they zealously support to-day.

3dly. The divine unity renders our duty easy and unperplexing, while we are engaged in pleasing God. As He is but one, we have but one to obey. But if we seek to please men, we become immediately perplexed with the contrary but urgent desires of many minds. Many masters are perplexing to servants. One will be of one mind, a second may widely differ from the first, and a third may disagree with both. Whoever, therefore, endeavours to gain the applause of men, although he may exert all his abilities and means to obtain their approbation, and although he may succeed, as to some, he is very sure to share largely in the censure of others.

4thly. As God can search the heart, He knows if we are sincere, and will bestow the reward of honesty, even if we commit mistakes ; but as the heart of man is deceitful, as he practises hypocrisy, so he is jealous of his neighbour, even if he be sincere, as, for the lack of discernment, his sincerity is not seen. Therefore, though we should, at the expense of incurring the divine disapprobation, do those things which men require of us, we are not certain that the jealousy of their hearts may not deprive us of all that reward for which we so anxiously sought.

5thly. And as the mind and will of God are always in favour of that which is for the best good of all creatures, we are sure of doing good unto

all by doing that which is well pleasing in his sight.

But if we endeavour to please men we must conform to all the partialities, for which they possess their strong predilections ; and while we might vainly fancy that we were pursuing a system of general good, we should be likely to find that our endeavours were directed to that which would oppose our professed object, and tend to the prejudice of society. No doubt it was in view of all these considerations and more than the ever faithful Apostle of the Gentiles said to the Thessalonians ; “ But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”

The word of truth and some of its important divisions will now claim our special attention.

The word of truth, in its general application in scripture, comprehends the promises made to the fathers ; what the holy spirit spake by the prophets concerning the Messiah ; the testimony borne by Jesus in his public ministry ; the miracles, by which the divinity of his mission was confirmed ; his death and resurrection, by which life and immortality were brought to light, together with the remission of our sins through the grace manifested in Christ Jesus. St. Peter, in his speech to the Centurion, when divinely instructed for the special purpose of communicating the gospel to that faithful and highly favoured servant of God, gives the following compendium of the word of truth ; see Acts 10. “ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ ; (he is Lord of all ;) that word I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy

Ghost, and with power ; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem ; whom they slew and hanged on a tree : Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." With this very comprehensive statement we will connect that which St. Paul made when at Antioch in Pisidia, as recorded in Acts 13. " Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead ; and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again ; as it is also written in the second Psalm, " thou art my son ; this day have I begotten thee."

According to these apostolic testimonies the word of truth speaks of facts which were known to them who bore witness, and were of such a nature that

they could be inquired into, in regard to their reality, and become subjects of belief to others, as do other matters of fact, of which faithful historians bear record.

To divide the word of truth rightly it seems necessary,

1st. To place in order, and distinctly by themselves, the promises which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob made to those venerable fathers, in which God promised to bless all the nations and all the families of the earth in Christ.

In relation to these promises several things ought to be carefully regarded. 1st. The blessing which was promised in favour of all nations. This we learn from St. Paul, who says to the Galatians ; " The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." This blessing we see was justification through faith.

2dly. Who are the subjects of this blessed promise ? The answer is, all the nations of the earth. If, therefore, we exclude any of the human family from this covenant of promise, we may just as well, and by as good authority, exclude all mankind.

3dly. Did this promise rest on any condition or duties required of those in whose favour it was made ? The answer to this question must be in the negative. God said ; " In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

4thly. How was this promise to bless all nations with justification through faith fulfilled ? Answer, as before quoted from St. Paul : " And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children in that he hath raised up Jesus again." This agrees with the testimony of the same Apostle to the Romans. Concerning Christ he says ; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification

And all this answers to what was represented by the high priest in the holiest of holies; he was there the justification of all the people.

2dly. Another very important division of the word of truth, which St. Paul calls the word of salvation, comprehends the faithful testimony of prophecy concerning the Messiah, and the extent and glory of his kingdom. Three particulars, in relation to this prophetic testimony, should be carefully noticed. The blessings which are promised; the extent of those blessings, and the unconditional character of the predictions, in all of which they will be found to agree exactly with the promise made to the fathers, which we have particularly noticed. In the 49th of Genesis we have the prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob, when about to close his mortal existence. He says; "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." It may be well to notice here, that the blessed Jesus, in his testimony concerning himself, said; "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." "Unto him *shall* the gathering of the people be." This is expressed in the same unconditional manner as are the promises; and the declaration of Jesus, that he would draw all men unto himself, is of the same positive character.

The 110th psalm contains a very instructive prophecy concerning Jesus: "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Here the same positive language is used as has been before noticed.

In his 2d chapter, Isaiah speaks as follows; "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted

above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it. In his 9th chapter he says again ; “ Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” How extensive will be the government and peace of the kingdom of Christ when this prophecy shall be fulfilled.

The same prophet, in his 25th chapter, says ; “ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things—and he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth ; for the Lord hath spoken it ! ” All this is in the same, unconditional language as that in which we have seen that the promises to the fathers were expressed. The veracity of Jehovah in the pledge.

Jeremiah, in his 31st chapter, speaking of the new covenant, of which Isaiah says in his 42d chapter ; “ I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners out of the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house, says ; “ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers—But this shall be the covenant—I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts : and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother,

saying, Know the Lord ; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The passages quoted from the prophets may suffice as a sample of their united testimony, and of the extent of the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ, also what these blessings of the new covenant are, and the divine authority on which they rest.

3dly. A third division of the word of truth may be made to embrace the testimony which Jesus bore in his own personal ministry. On this particular I will state but one question. In what character did the preaching of Jesus, who was the greatest and best preacher ever on our earth, and who ought to be imitated by all who profess to preach, represent our Creator ? Did it represent Him in the character of an absolute tyrant, electing some, as favourites, and making them heirs of immortal felicity ; and dooming others to everlasting woe, according to no other law than sovereign caprice ? Or did it commend our Creator as our Father and our unchangeable friend ? Let the words of the divine preacher give the answer ; "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." My friends, does God love his enemies, is he kind to the evil, and the unthankful ? And is this the doctrine which our opposers condemn as licentious ? From the hallowed lips of Jesus did a licentious doctrine come ? He said again ; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Taught by the preaching of Jesus, we look up to heaven and contemplate our Father there, our everlasting, unchangeable friend.

4thly. The account we have of the miracles of Jesus, by which he gave ample confirmation of the divinity of his mission, should be regarded as an important division of the word of truth. Respecting these miracles, several particulars should be kept in mind. 1st. They were all miracles of mercy. The possessed of demons were relieved; the people brought their sick by all the means they had, and Jesus healed them all. The dead were raised to life; the blind were made to see; the hungry were fed, and all shared of his compassion.

2dly. Those miracles were performed openly and before the eyes of friends and enemies. Had there been any fraud practised, it would have been detected. The enemies of Jesus were sufficiently on their guard, for their resentment was quite sufficient to excite their vigilance; and the miracles were of such a character that they could not have gained the least credit, if they had not been realities. And 3dly. These miracles, of divine compassion, appeared to be stamped with the seal of that wisdom which is from above, which is "full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." No inquiry was ever made respecting the former conduct of those subjects of favour; no negotiations were stipulated respecting the future, whether they would become the disciples of their benefactor or not. No such contracts were made; but as heaven sheds the blessings of nature, so did Jesus confer the miracles of his grace. Let this subject be ever regarded as an important division of the word of truth.

5thly. The death and resurrection of the Saviour, by which sin and death were abolished,

and life and immortality brought to light, may be justly regarded as that division of the word of truth, which, to the believer in Jesus, is of infinite importance. Earthly enjoyments take to themselves wings and fly away. All that is dear to us below the sun will soon depart. The wrinkle of age and the infirmities of decayed constitutions admonish us that our time is but short. Look we at the dear companions of our bosoms? There are the wastes of time and the marks of decay. Look we at the rose of health and the lily of beauty in the circle of our domestic delights? How soon will the worm of mortality wither these sweetly blushing flowers, and strew their leaves in the dust! How soon will that glorious sun, which hath illumined our delighted eyes, cease to give us light, and all the charms of nature recede from our enjoyment. With such reflections we advance to the margin of this perturbed ocean of mortality, and here we see our friends, one after another, drop into the yawning deep, and they are hid from our eyes, which shall see them no more! On this dark ocean the day star of hope arises; of that hope which is an anchor to the soul entering into that within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered. By this holy light we look to the blooming fields of immortality with the assurance that we shall meet our kindred souls in those mansions of everlasting peace and joy. How precious is this theme of divine truth. Let the minister of the word duly regard this most important subject as an antidote for all the troubles of life, and as a victory over mortality and death.

6thly. Another division of the word of truth may embrace the teachings of that divine favour, by which our sins are forgiven, and the smiles of our heavenly Father cast most benignantly upon us.

Such is our weakness, such are our moral infirmities, that we need constant instructions, by

which we may be taught what to avoid and what to pursue. In his epistle to Titus, St. Paul has left us a rich legacy. He says ; " The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world." You will carefully notice, my friends, that such is the teaching of that grace of God which bringeth salvation to all men.

Our opposers contend, that a doctrine which embraces all men as the objects of the divine favour, teaches licentiousness ; yet this is the rock on which we are taught to set our feet, that we may be able to resist ungodliness and worldly lusts. On this rock we place our confidence ; for we are commanded not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. By this impartial grace we are taught to live soberly. If we live soberly we shall live according to wise and prudent rules of temperance. Gluttony will be avoided ; and the luxuries of the table will be guarded against. Drunkenness will be held in just abhorrence, and the excess of wine restricted. Without sobriety even the pleasures of sense are blunted and rendered insipid ; and as for the rational and sweet enjoyments of religion, the intellect is not in a situation to receive them.

By this grace we are taught to live righteously. To live thus, we must do unto others as we would they should do unto us. Such is the proneness of the human heart to vary from the standard of moral right, that the divine teacher has in his mercy, accommodated us with a rule so laconic, so easy to be remembered, that we may at all times have it at command. " Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets." Whoever will contemplate carefully the impartial grace of God, which designs the salvation of all men, will be taught at once, that such grace na

turally leads us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to embrace their happiness as our own.

By this grace we are also taught to live godly. To live so we must live piously. We must exercise an habitual devotion to God. Our thoughts should be constantly directed to our Father in heaven. Such a habit will act as an easy yet efficient restraint on the passions, and will render all the duties of religion our meat and drink. This division of the word of truth requires the careful attention of the minister, that his instructions may be salutary and profitable to the people.

7thly. And lastly ; As man is beset with temptations to sin against God by disregarding his divine commands, and to follow blind inclinations to his own injury, our heavenly Father has most graciously provided such admonitions, such warnings, and even threatenings in the faithful word of truth as are suited to our condition, and are necessary for our profit. This general subject constitutes a most valuable division of the faithful word, and should occupy the attention of the minister.

“He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done ; and there is no respect of persons.” Jesus says, he “will reward every man according to his works.” Let the faithful minister duly regard this division of the word ; let him raise a persuasive, a warning voice against sin ; yea let him faithfully apply the threatenings which are recorded in the scriptures of truth, and that to their full extent. But let him never forget that these threatenings are those of a Father and a friend ; that they are indications of love and favour, not of implacable wrath and indignation. The punishments denounced in the word of God are the chastisements with which the Father of our spirits corrects our faults and amends our hearts ; they were never designed to be used as instruments of unmerciful torture to the gratifica-

tion of the wicked passions of sinful men. Let these threatenings be applied as the scriptures apply them ; not as they are applied by the erring creeds of men's inventions. Finally let the minister duly and properly attend to every division of the word of truth, and thereby show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.

SERMON XXI.

POLICY OF PRIESTCRAFT.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, FAST DAY, APRIL 3, 1828.

JEREMIAH, V. 30, 31.

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

RESTING on the authority of our text, as well as on the evidence of all history and observation, as far as they relate to the subject, we are authorized to state the deplorable fact, that in all ages and in all countries, that order of men, called the ministers of religion, have been much prone to the love of power. This disposition is not peculiar to any one order or grade in society, but seems to be indulged by most of men accordingly as they are possessed of means for its gratification. The ministers of religion, generally speaking, and especially the popular clergy, have many advantages in their hands, and they seldom fail to improve them, of gaining an ascendancy over the common people, and of securing the confidence of the populace; so that when they come to exert a most rigorous and unreasonable rule over them, the people love to have it so.

The account, given in the text, informs us how the priests of Israel obtained their power to rule the people. There was in that nation another order of men called prophets, whose profession was to foretell future events. It seems that these two

orders concerted measures and means which were directed to this monopoly of power. As it is not natural for men to wish to be slaves, they never would be, if they were not decoyed into it, either by force or fraud. These are both employed, but fraud generally leads the way. In our context we have the following statement. "For among my people are found wicked men; they lay wait as he that setteth snares: they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit; therefore they are become great, and waxen rich." Whatever false predictions were wanted for the purpose of deceiving the people, the prophets were ready to predict; and the priests stood ready to take advantage of those deceptions to bring the people into entire submission to their measures. If, on the one hand, a fallacious prosperity was predicted, the priests, having the confidence of the people, could dictate the terms by which such prosperity might be realized. If on the other hand, a fallacious calamity was predicted, the priests could point out those measures by which such calamity might be averted; and in proportion as the people loved their own prosperity, or desired to avoid the dire judgments of heaven, they esteemed this priestly rule and the slavery to which it subjected them. Such was the blind, preposterous folly of a misguided people, who had eyes, but saw not; who had ears, but could not hear; who had hearts, but could not perceive. Driven by this force, and blinded by this craft, the house of Israel became the most stupid and degraded idolaters, supporting an hireling priesthood, at an enormous expense, which consumed their corn, their oil and their wine, and which wrenched the last mite they possessed from them; and to cap the climax of folly and madness, immolated their sons and daughters on the altar of Moloch!

In view of such perverseness, the hearer may be led to exclaim, Why was such an order of men

ever suffered to hold a standing in society? Far better would it be to have no priesthood! Away with the whole order of clergy! Let us not be too hasty. Remember that the priesthood of the house of Israel was established as an ordinance of heaven; it was set up by the special command of God. It is not this *order* of men which is the evil of which God, by his prophet complains, but it is their perverse and wicked conduct. A well ordered state of human society requires an order of men, who specially devote themselves to the interests of religion. The great and glorious head of the christian church appointed a ministry. While he laboured in the flesh he chose twelve disciples, and appointed them as apostles to bear the testimony of his truth to mankind; and at one time he sent forth seventy others to minister his truth and favour to the Jewish nation. But this immaculate high Priest of our profession, this Bishop of our souls, gave frequent lessons to the ministry which he appointed, designed to guard them against a departure from the sacred duties of the office to which he had appointed them. He called them the salt of the earth; but cautiously pointed out the dangerous consequences which would result from their losing the savour of his spirit. He called them the light of the world; but prudently set forth the uselessness of a light which is hid. He acknowledged them his servants; but did not fail to inform them that nothing short of attention to their duty would secure them from sharing the dreadful calamities, which he had, in their hearing, denounced on hypocrites and unbelievers.

There is no blessing which man enjoys that may not be perverted to his disadvantage; and it is generally, if not always the case that the perversion of the greatest of blessings produces the greatest evils. It is too often the case that law is used for a trap to ensnare the simple, and through the perverseness of corrupt adjudication, its severest penalties are made to fall on the innocent, while

the guilty escape with impunity. But we should egregiously err should we contend that law was unnecessary, and that there ought to be no such orders of men in society as judges and executioners.

The complaining, the accusing, the warning voice of inspiration is not raised against the priesthood or the administrators of law and government, as an order established in society ; but against the wickedness which men practice, who are honoured with appointments in these useful establishments. It is when the ministers of religion, forgetful of their responsibility, devote themselves to the study of craft, and employ all the means of deception in their power, to obtain the confidence of the people, to secure to themselves the affections of the people, to make the multitude look up to them for security against threatened vengeance, and to depend on their interest with heaven for all the blessings they need ; and when these deceivers use the whole weight of this immense influence to bring the people into the most degrading bondage and slavery, that the accusing voice of heaven is heard against them. Nor is this voice heard against them alone who practice this deceit, and who, by means thereof, rule the people ; but it is equally against the people themselves, who debase their nature and dishonour God, by such stupidity.

"And what will ye do in the end thereof?" is a question, the prophet, by the Spirit of God, put to prophets, priests and people, who were all united in the commission of the horrible thing of which complaint was made. By this question was indicated the deplorable ruin which awaited that wicked, perverse and rebellious nation. We read their wickedness in the records of their true prophets ; we read the vengeance which their sins procured in the prophecies of Moses, their lawgiver, and in the rest of their prophets ; and we read their end in Josephus, their own historian.

Do you ask why destruction should be sent on a nation for the deceptions practised by its priest-

hood, and for the rule which was exercised over them, so long as they are agreeable to the people? If the people loved to have it so, why should it offend God? These questions are answered by the author of our text, as follows: "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger; do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?—They have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire." It is not necessary that an offended God should pour out his vengeance on a people, whose folly and madness bring swift destruction on themselves. There is no need of a miracle to ruin a people, whose religion and policy dissolve the tenderest ties of nature, and freeze the compassions of the parental heart. We need not look up for a minister of wrath to be sent from heaven, to distress a people, who are all engaged in their own destruction. Heaven's arm would save; its voice would recall; but deafness and resistance drive on to ruin. A blinded people, guided by priestcraft, doom themselves to deplorable calamities.

That which is recorded in the scriptures, relating to this subject, is written for our admonition; and it behooves us to listen to its instructions. Let us open our eyes and look about us. What do we see? and what do we hear? We both hear and see evidences, which are gross and palpable, of an aspiring priesthood, an order of clergy, who for thirst of power, and for arts and intrigues to obtain it, were never outdone, by a similar order, in any age or country.

The false prophets in Israel, who prophesied lies, were of incalculable service to the priests,

who bore rule by their means. But our clergy can do their own prophesying ; they have no need of prophets to prophesy falsely. Indeed, such short sighted prophets as those who made a trade of lying, in the days of Jeremiah, and who then obtained a good living by their business, would now answer little or no purpose in assisting our clergy in their craft. Those prophets did not pretend to extend their predictions into a future state of existence ; their predictions regarded the temporal concerns of the people ; and this answered all the purposes which were to be served by their falsehoods ; but our clergy, having united the profession of prophesy with their own functions, look directly into the future world, and pretend to predict what awaits us there. There they have a God, whose favours and frowns are at their disposal. There they have a heaven, on whose territories none are allowed to enter, but such as comply with conditions dictated by them. There they have a hell, furnished with all the apparatus of torture necessary to torment, to the last degree, all who do not submit to their rule, in this life ; and a devil also at their service, to administer their wrath and the vengeance of their God for ever. With all these advantages to aid their cunning, and to render their craft successful, they leave no exertion untried, which promises the least success in deceiving the people, and in drawing them into their snares. They come to the people with the strongest professions of love and friendship ; they can command even the tears of the crocodile, and weep over us in fearful apprehensions of the wrath of their god, which they say is suspended over our heads ; and from which they are, as it were, in a dying agony to save our poor, ruined, immortal souls. They bring us the terms of salvation, and use every persuasion, which rhetoric commands, to make us yield to their proffers. The people, who are taken by their craft, look on them as their sole dependence ; and hope, by submitting to their

terms, to obtain salvation from the wrath of heaven, from the direful flames of hell, and from the cruel tortures which their devil is desirous of inflicting.

This is, in very deed, a strange and horrible thing. How should it happen that the people should believe that their ministers of religion are more merciful than the divine Being? How happens it that rational beings should believe that their maker and preserver is such a tyrant, as to make a hell and a devil to torment his own offspring, and yet believe that he has sent these merciful ministers to effect their deliverance from all this designed mischief? The answer is found in the chapter which contains our text. "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding: which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not;" Of what use are our faculties to us, if others, whose trade is to delude us, have the control of them? Of what use are our eyes, if we do not see? or our ears, if we do not hear?

That the clergy in our country are determined to gain an ascendancy over the people, even far beyond what they now exercise, is abundantly evident from the unwearied exertions which they are making to add to all their other means of influence, that of monied institutions. No scheme which clerical ingenuity and deceit have been able to invent and cause to act, has been omitted. At our doors stand their runners and beggars; in our parlours they solicit money of our wives and daughters; in our kitchens they wring from the female hand of labour its penny, its last farthing. With hearts harder than flint, and colder than marble, they will plead, in the most persuasive manner, with little children to relinquish the grateful sweets which the God of nature adapted to their taste, that the unnatural sacrifice may be turned into money to be used in saving souls. And such is the mania of deluded parents, that, in many instances, such degrading folly is indulged, while

the clergy, in room of being ashamed of conduct so derogatory to humanity and good sense, boldly publish to the world their success in deception, and endeavour to excite others to become equally stupid.

This order of men study human nature, with avidity of application, to find out every possible avenue to the weakness of mankind ; and they have discovered that a blind enthusiasm, regarding religion, will drive people fastest and farthest of any spirit by which they can be moved. In order to elude detection, they place their objects all in a future world, to which region the eye cannot extend. On these subjects they dwell with boldness and pathos, describing the misery of the damned in the most lively and moving manner, insisting at the same time, on the strict eternity of its duration ; and directing the attention of their hearers to the destitute condition of the heathen, who have not the *blessed* sound of their gospel of endless torments ; they assure them that nothing can save those millions of rational beings from such torments in the future, eternal world, but the labours of missionaries. And now comes the cry for money. Money is wanted to carry salvation to heathen lands ; money is wanted to present bibles for heathen to read ; and many are so stupid as to think if the heathen had our bible to read, it would be the means of saving them from divine wrath ; not reflecting that if the heathen had enough of our bibles to serve them for fuel, they could not read a word in them. But all this deception is carried on for the purpose of obtaining the people's money. Money, they know is power. By it they are persuaded that they can control the concerns and affairs of state. Their bible societies are schemes deeply concerted to sponge money from those whom they have rendered blindly superstitious ; and such has been the astonishing success of this system of deceit and fraud, that funds are immense. They can print bibles

and sell them at cost of paper, and still be growing rich ; for the public furnish all the funds. Sabbath School societies are designed to further the same system of deception, and monopoly of influence and rule. At Sabbath Schools children have the blasphemous sentiments instilled into their tender minds, by which they are taught to hate their Maker and love their ministers. This prepares them for the right kind of servitude when they come to mature years ; and this scheme too requires money ; and by it they are accumulating, by means of tracts and other artful inventions, and adding to their funds.

By means of the immense revenues which are constantly flowing into the hands of the clergy, they are able to exert an influence in society, which to the apprehension of the sober, enlightened politician, is truly alarming. Already are they able to build meeting houses at the expense of their funds, taking care, at the same time, that they secure those houses for ever to the interest of their superstition. In country towns, where the light of reason and common sense has been so far exercised as to cause this clerical influence to decline, and the people are weary of paying money for that which is disgusting, they are told if they will pay but a part of the minister's salary, the rest will be made up out of the mission fund. And it is a fact that much money from those funds, is drawn annually for the support of preaching, in our country towns, where there is no want of wealth, and where but few will attend meeting excepting women and children.

The applications which are made to our state legislatures for the incorporation of ministerial funds, for the support of a certain designated sect, show very plainly, that the design is to engage legislation in support of priestcraft. What now will be the efforts of the clergy in towns and parishes to influence elections in favour of those who will be devoted to their cause ! Let the peop'

these states keep their eyes shut and their ears closed a little longer ; let these clerical funds grow but a little more enormous, and they may fancy themselves freemen, and go to the polls with the boast of freedom and independence, but the clergy will control their franchise as they please, and no man will be held up for office, but such as will go all lengths with them.

What shall we think of these men, who thus endeavour to enslave their fellow creatures ? It is hard to judge them, and say they are dishonest ; that they are designing, crafty men ; and yet we must say this, or, what they would as little like, that they are not possessed of common sense. Can they possibly believe that money is wanted to save the souls of men from the wrath of our Creator ? This is what they pretend ; and they cry, money, money, as if they were in distress. Scarcely do we hear a word from their lips concerning the redeeming favour of our heavenly Father, which is so richly communicated in the gospel of his beloved Son, who gave himself a ransom for the whole world. Not to save us from the wrath of God ; but from priestcraft, and its degrading oppressions. The clergy would cause us to fear falling into the hands of God ; but, my friends, I think the danger is of falling into the hands of the clergy.

If the blessed Saviour of the world had been the author of such a scheme of amassing money, as appears to engage the skill and craft of the clergy of our times, his directions to his apostles would have read materially different from what we find them in the New Testament. When he sent them out to preach, he would have said, "And as ye preach, say money, money, for the kingdom of priestcraft is at hand ; and go ye into all the world and beg money of every creature ; he that giveth, and giveth all he hath, shall be saved ; but he that giveth not shall be damned." But he who had not where to lay his head, who forbade his apostles to take with them either purse or scrip, was never the author

of this craft, which is evidently reaching after the reins of government in our country.

Thanks be to heaven, there are hopes of redemption yet ; and if the people will open their eyes they will in season see their danger and avert it. But a little longer continuance of that apathy, which has already put the ministers of religion in possession of their present means of influence, will involve our country in slavery, and render our present free government, with all its blessings, a something to be remembered, a something that has been, but gone for ever.

Awake, then from this lethargy, and, if these beggars of money appear at your doors, dismiss them with the deserved reproof. They now have the audacity to contend, that we ought to devote all our property to their cause ; and it is true that not a cent less will ever satisfy their thirst.

“ A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land : the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means ; and my people love to have it so : and what will ye do in the end thereof ? ”

GREAT GOD ! if nature, weak and frail,
To strong temptations oft gives way ;
If doubt or passion should prevail
O'er wand'ring reason's feeble ray ;

On thy compassion I rely :
Let not thy frowns my faults reprove ;
Regard me with a father's eye,
And guide me with a father's love.

SERMON XXII.

SALVATION OF ALL A DOCTRINE OF REPROACH.

DELIVERED IN PHILADELPHIA, ON MONDAY, JUNE 2, 1828.

1 TIM. IV. 10.

"For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

THE gospel ministry, being a dispensation of divine benevolence, requires labours to be performed upon the most benevolent principles. It is founded on that love which our heavenly Father has manifested towards such as are enemies to Him by wicked works. It does not inquire after those who will applaud its exertions, but seeks to find those who need its favours. "God hath commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins." If man had not been unreconciled to God, there could have been no necessity for a dispensation of favour to reconcile him; but the gospel ministry is a dispensation of reconciliation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech

you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The gospel ministry, being of the character here set forth, recommends itself on the same principle on which all genuine benevolence proceeds. True benevolence will not be diverted from its path of kindness because the object of its favour is opposed to its measures, nor because it receives reproaches from those whose benefit it pursues. The wise and provident father of a family, having concerted plans and measures for the prosperity of his temporal interest, that he might thereby benefit his children, whom he loved, would not be dissuaded from his plans because his unwise and inexperienced children might be opposed to them. And should they so far indulge their folly, as to reproach their venerable father with grievous accusations, though he might find it necessary to chastise their ingratitude, he would not withhold from them that loving kindness which was the moving principle of all his measures.

In order to improve this subject, in a manner appropriate to the present important occasion, we propose to consider, 1st. The labours to which the gospel minister is appointed: 2d. The occasion and peculiar character of the reproach which his faithful labourers are sure to receive: And 3d. Set forth the speciality of salvation enjoyed by those who believe.

The work in which the minister of Christ is employed, is that of reformation. To teach and reform men is the great object at which he aims. In doing this he follows the example set by the divine master. The Saviour of the world was a "teacher sent from God;" and the work in which he laboured was the work of giving instruction, of correcting the errors of religious people, and of dissuading all from evil practices. To this work he applied himself in earnest, and prosecuted it with

a zeal corresponding with its importance. For the promotion of this vast work he employed his apostles; and to render them successful, he furnished them with a mouth and wisdom against which no opposition could prevail. When, in a miraculous manner, the Saviour called Saul, the persecutor, to be a minister of his word, he said to him, "Arise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

By the assistance of a few reflections on this appointment of the Apostle Paul to the ministry, we shall see its agreement with the benevolent principles set forth in the introduction of this discourse. The great head of the church appointed this Apostle to labour among the Gentiles, for the purpose of opening their eyes, of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But notwithstanding his labours were designed to be thus beneficial to the people; though it was designed to put them in possession of an invaluable inheritance, it was signified to him that they would oppose and persecute him, but that he should be delivered from them. How infinitely benevolent, how divinely merciful, is the ministry of Christ! How preposterous and ungrateful is the opposition with which it contends!

When the Saviour called Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother, from their occupation of fishers, he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And in one of his parables, he represents the gospel by a net with which fishes are caught. By such emblems did the divine mas-

ter represent the labours by which his disciples should accomplish the designs of their ministry, in gathering men into the gospel kingdom of righteousness and peace.

After his resurrection, Jesus held a most interesting conversation with Peter, who thrice denied him on the memorable night in which he was betrayed. By the sea of Tiberius, after the disciples had refreshed themselves with food, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my lambs. He saith again unto him the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, feed my sheep."

And in his last, his farewell charge to his disciples, the Saviour said; "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen."

These instructions, which were given to the Apostles, clearly set forth the nature of the work to which it is the duty of a christian minister to attend.

2dly. According to promise, we may now notice the occasion and peculiar character of the reproach which faithfulness in the gospel ministry is sure to provoke, from those for whose benefit it is designed. That we may avoid embarrassment, by keeping at a distance from the superstitions of our own times, we may begin this inquiry by asking what

occasioned the reproaches which were suffered by Christ and his Apostles? Never was a teacher more reviled, never was one more reproached, than was the blessed Jesus himself. And what seems as the most peculiar trait in the character of that enmity, which was so much excited and brought into action by him who spake as never man spake, is that it became the most pungent, and put on its worst rage, at those benevolent acts, which were the most evident marks of the divine power and goodness. That astonishing miracle, which gave sight to a man who was born blind, elicited from the enemies of Jesus their most careful scrutiny. They first contended that this man had not been blind; and to make it out that he had not, they called his parents to testify respecting the fact. They held over the parents the dreadful lash of excommunication; having established an ordinance, that if any should have the temerity to confess Christ openly, they should be cast out of the synagogue. They would be willing to allow people the rights of the synagogue, who believed in Jesus, if they would be hypocrites and deny him. But the parents were cautious enough to elude their wicked designs, and told them that their son was truly born blind; but as he was of age to answer for himself, respecting the means by which he had received sight, they might put their questions to him. Having learned from the man himself, that it was Jesus who had bestowed on him this inestimable favour, they replied, "Give God the glory; as for this man, we know he is a sinner." When their vigilant enemies were convinced, by ocular demonstration, that Jesus had cast out a most inveterate demon, they blasphemously asserted that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Simon, the Pharisee, perhaps with an intention to draw a teacher who was so much followed by the people, away from wicked company, invited Jesus to his house to dine. But he had not been there but a short

time, when sinful Mary came and washed his feet with her tears of penitence, and wiped them with her hair. This indulgence of Jesus provoked reproach. Simon said, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what manner of woman this is, for she is a sinner." Jesus was reproached for being a friend to publicans and sinners; of receiving sinners and eating with them; of going to be a guest with sinners.

It is very possible that the query arises in the mind of the hearers, what was the cause of this enmity, and of these reproaches? This is the subject of the present inquiry; and you have the substance of the answer in our text. The same "rock of offence" which procured the reproach of the Apostles, was that which excited the religious Jews to reproach their master. St. Paul, in our text, says, "Because we trust in the living God; who is the Saviour of all men." If Jesus had told the Pharisees and Scribes, the elders and doctors of the law, that God was their Father and Saviour, but that his wrath and displeasure rested on the rest of mankind, they would never have reproached him. He might have wrought his miracles of mercy on those who belonged to their orders, without giving them the least offence. But the indiscriminate benevolence of his grace they abhorred. The doctrine which he preached, was equally as offensive as were his miracles. This doctrine, which commends our heavenly Father as the Saviour of all men, we learn most clearly from such instructions as the following: "It hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." If we must love our enemies, that we may be like our heaven-

ly Father; and if, to be like him, we must do good to those who hate us, is it possible to avoid the conclusion that God is the Saviour of all?

The christian ministry, being opposed to that immense mass of error which the religious Jews had imbibed, and of those wicked traditions by which they made void the law of God, could not fail to bring on its votaries the enmity and cruelty of those whose errors and traditions it opposed. But had the gospel been as partial as were the creeds of men, then would there have been no offence.

What we see in our own times, fully confirms the arguments here laid down. The revival of the apostolic doctrine, which teaches us to trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and the labours which have been devoted to advance the light and knowledge of this doctrine, have received, in our day, no better reception, among a people whose creeds have limited the favour of our heavenly Father, than did the same doctrine among the Pharisees and Scribes, in the days of Christ and his Apostles. And it is abundantly worthy of notice, that the reproaches which are cast on the promulgators and professors of this blessed doctrine, in our times, are of a similar character to those which indicated the spirit of the Pharisee in former times. The parable of the elder brother of the prodigal was designed, by the Saviour, to represent the moral condition of his enemies. Because the father had kindly received the penitent; and because there were indulgences of joy suited to the happy occasion, the elder brother was angry, and would not consent to join in the felicities of the happy family. The father's kind entreaties and exhortations, in room of softening his hard heart, only drew forth most bitter reproaches. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but as soon as this thy

son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

Here we have the subject of our inquiry plainly laid before us. The peculiar character of this reproach appears in the words of the elder son to his father. This reproach accuses the father of being more kind, and granting greater favour to his son, who had lived a wicked and profligate life, than to him who had so faithfully served him, as never to have transgressed his command. This is surely the same reproach which is now brought against our labours, which are designed to persuade men to trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all. The angry son, in the parable, did not reproach his father for not being willing that he should partake of the fatted calf with his brother, for this was the very thing to which the father endeavoured, without success, to persuade him. The reproach embraced two accusations—1st. The father had not in times past suitably recompensed his faithful services; and, 2d. He had shown an unjustifiable kindness to the wicked. Now this is precisely the amount of all the reproach which, in our times, is urged against the blessed doctrine of the salvation of all men. The Pharisees of the present day contend that in this life the righteous are not recompensed. They attend to arduous duties which yield them not a kid to make merry with their friends; and if their neighbours, who here live at ease, and seldom pay tithes of mint, annis and cummin, are to be received to everlasting favour hereafter, when mortality shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up of life, then it is evident that our heavenly Father shows more kindness to the wicked than to the righteous. Thus they speak against God, thus they reproach the most High.

It is very possible that while we are now attending to this subject, there may be some present, who are unable to see why the elder son had not

good reason for his anger, or why the father did not deserve the reproach which he received. And it is believed that no subject in moral philosophy would be investigated to more profit than this. But our present limited opportunity will not allow of a lengthy disquisition ; and therefore we must meet this reproach and answer it by showing the mistake on which it was founded, in a few words. We say, then, that this elder brother was totally wrong in his premises. He had lived an habitual violation of all the commands of his father. He had not loved his father with all his heart, nor had he loved his brother as he loved himself. On these two hang all the commandments. If he had loved his father as he ought to have done, he would not have reproached him because he showed compassion on a son who had been dead and had come to life, who had been lost and found again. And if he had loved his brother as he loved himself, how would his heart have rejoiced at his return to the paternal mansion ! And here comes out the error, which supposed that in the past time, there had been no proper recompense for righteousness. The fact was there had been no righteousness ; and therefore none to recompense. The Pharisees, to whom this parable was addressed, supposed that they were righteous and that others were wicked ; but the Saviour taught the people, that unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Had this elder son loved his father with all his heart, and had he loved the commandments which his father, in love, had enjoined upon him, then obedience would have recompensed itself ; for in keeping the commandments is great reward ; and great peace have they who love the law.

What shall we say to these things ? Are our brethren, who reproach the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, really righteous ? Do they

love this living God with all the heart? If they did, would they reproach him because he is "good to all, and because his tender mercies are over all his works?" Do they love their fellow creatures as they do themselves? If they did, would they be angry when they are told that God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth? What a deplorable condition are they in? Like the elder son, they are in a worse state than are those whom they call wicked. The Saviour told the Scribes and Pharisees of his time, that those whom they called sinners, and the most abandoned, should go into heaven before them. Such instruction was then a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence; it was the occasion of the reproach which fell on Jesus and his disciples; and it remains now what it was then. Those who now look on themselves as righteous, yet are not so, are offended at the same doctrine.

The peculiar nature of this reproach is evidently seen in the most common objection which is now urged against the salvation of all men. This objection states that this doctrine removes all restraint against sin, and induces to every species of wickedness. Some are so confident that this reproach is well founded, that they not only take it for granted that those who profess this doctrine, and those who promulgate it, are perversely immoral, but they moreover assure us that if they believed it, they would conduct far worse than they do whom they thus reproach. But do these our brethren, understand what they indicate by such reproach? Do they know, that it is proclaiming to the world that they love sin; that they in heart desire it; that it is not for the want of love to immorality, that they are not wallowing in its filth? Such error as this lies at the foundation of all the abominations, which have characterized MYSTERY BABYLON, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, from the stoning of Stephen, to the hanging of Quakers in New England; and it is the same error which

now fills the mouths of those who reproach the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.

Another reproach, not less indicative of the peculiar character of the opposition to truth, which now rages to an alarming degree, is the accusation of impiety. It is constantly urged that our belief and trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, naturally tends to impiety. And our brethren who thus reproach us, will not allow that there can be any real sincerity in our devotions. Their confidence of this fact is so strong, that they assure us that did they believe, that God is the Saviour of all men, they would never attend public worship at all, nor yet private devotion. But do our brethren, who thus reproach us with impiety, know, that by this reproach they acknowledge that all their devotions are nothing but pretensions? Do they understand that they hereby acknowledge, that they are in the habit of drawing near unto God with their lips, while their heart is far from him? If they loved God with all the heart, would they not worship him in spirit and in truth, in the sanctuary, in the closet, in fields, in groves, and gardens? Would they not devoutly adore him for every blessing of this life; and would they not pour forth their joyful hearts in gratitude for the hope of eternal life? But being blind to the nature of these things, they offer their devotions from motives which kindle *strange fire* on the altar; while they boast of their frequent and fervent prayers, and reproach others for coming short in this duty. In fact, they have much to say on this subject. They make, as they seem to think, a most advantageous comparison between their piety and that of others, measuring the difference by the greater number of their prayers, and their greater length, and their greater fervency. So, perhaps, did the prophets of Baal calculate on their prayers. They prayed to their idol from morning until noon; and they gave evidence of their fervency and sincerity by leaping upon

their altar, by crying aloud, saying, O Baal, hear us; and also by cutting themselves with knives and lances until the blood gushed out upon them. How impious must Elijah have appeared to these devout servants of Baal! He, in room of being at all solemnized by their devotions, stood and mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Let us be admonished by him, who, knowing the hypocrisy of the human heart, knew that long prayers were often made to be seen of men, and were offered by such as devoured widow's houses.

Again, the character of this reproach, which is now suffered, by those who trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, is manifested by the accusation, that they are not zealous in the glorious cause of missions. This subject stands as a criterion, by which our opposers divide the righteous from the wicked. Whoever will give money, or lands, or anything else for missionary purposes, is allowed to be the friend of God and religion; but heavy anathemas are denounced on those who neglect this duty. But we reply to this reproach, observing that, among the items set down as duties performed to the justification of the righteous, but neglected to the condemnation of the wicked, as recorded in Matthew 25th, no mention is made of giving money or lands to support foreign missions. And we moreover refer those who reproach us on this ground, to the words of the Saviour: "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves."

Another accusation, with which the servants of truth are reproached, and which very evidently discovers the nature of this opposing spirit, regards the subject of what are called *revivals of re-*

igion. It is contended that those who believe, and teach, that God is the Saviour of all men, not only have no revivals among them, but are enemies to revivals. They are persuaded that it is utterly impossible to get up a revival, without holding up the dreadful terrors of unspeakable torments in the future invisible world. Thousands may be delivered from the power of darkness, and be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; into the kingdom of light, love and peace. Societies may be multiplied, who profess the soul-rejoicing doctrine of impartial grace and salvation; and houses for public worship may be builded, dedicated to God, and thronged with worshippers; but all this, is only a declension in religion; all this, in room of being a revival, is downright opposition to revivals! Nothing is religion unless it is induced by the terrors of everlasting punishment! Nothing will answer for a revival, in religion, unless it be such a revival, as that of which we have an account in the 3d of Daniel. On the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold, three score cubits in height. At the dedication of this idol, all the princes and rulers in the kingdom were assembled, and a proclamation was made to the immense assembly, to fall down and worship this image of gold, as soon as they should hear the sound of all kinds of music, on pain of being cast, the same hour, into a fiery furnace. This was a wonderful revival; but it depended on the terrors of the furnace; not on any love the people felt for the idol. Was not this genuine devotion? It was, no doubt, as sincere as was ever offered for fear of everlasting punishment.

But it is time that we inquire concerning the speciality of salvation enjoyed by those who believe. St. Paul says: "We who have believed do enter into rest." And, again, he speaks of "joy and peace in believing." And who can set forth this joy and peace beyond their reality? Well

did the apostle know how to appreciate it. Once could he heap reproaches on Jesus and his disciples ; once could he breathe out threatenings against the saints ; once was he exceedingly mad in his opposition to the true faith ; but he obtained an abundance of that grace which he had so much despised, and he prized it above all things else on earth. Our opposers now contend, that if the doctrine we profess, be true, there is no advantage in believing it. They say, they are just as well without the knowledge of it, as they would be even if they were certain of its truth. But such argument is entirely inconsistent with their own pretensions. They profess to be much concerned for the eternal salvation of their own souls ; they express great anxiety for the eternal salvation of their children and neighbours, and even for the heathen. But how is it possible that in all their pretensions they can be sincere, and yet say that they should not be any more happy if they were sure that they themselves, their children and neighbours, together with the heathen, and even all mankind, were secure in him who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time ?

My Christian friends, well may we esteem the speciality of salvation, enjoyed by believing, of greater value than earthly riches. It inspires the heart with love to God ; it endears the name of Jesus to him who exercises it ; it is intimately connected with that hope which is an anchor to the soul, entering within the veil.

May he who walks among the golden candlesticks, and holds the seven stars in his right hand, make ministers faithful unto death, that the churches may enjoy the special salvation of believing and walking in the truth.

SERMON XXIII.

GOD THE AUTHOR OF ALL THINGS.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, JULY 5, 1829.

1 SAMUEL, XXII. part 22.

"I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy Father's house."

AMONG the numerous subjects of controversy, which have engaged the attention of polemic writers, and which have caused divisions in the christian church, no one has been more signalized, or become more prominent than the question, whether the Supreme Being can properly be said to be the author of *all things*, in the most extensive use of the words. While that class of doctors, which have, for ages, defended the system of divinity, which embraces the doctrine of the foreordination of all things, have found no difficulty in confounding the advocates of the opposite hypothesis, they have never been able to free their own creed from objections, no less embarrassing, than those with which they confounded their opposers.

The predestinarian, by urging the foreknowledge of God in all things, which the Arminian doctors could not deny, have been able to demonstrate the *certainty* of all events as clearly as this certainty is established by the hypothesis of predestination. This argument the Arminian has never been able to overcome. But though he could never satisfy the predestinarian that human agency could possibly go contrary to the divine prescience, he could put him to utter confusion by showing that by the

doctrine of foreordination, God is made the author of all the sin, which wicked beings have committed. And then, making use of a proposition which they both allow, that sin deserves and must receive an infinite and an endless punishment, he presents the appalling absurdity to his adversary, of the foreordination of sin by the divine Being, and also the foreordination of this infinite punishment for sin !

We have here in plain view, the great and embarrassing subject of controversy, and even of contention, which has divided the christian church for ages ; and if we carefully observe, we may easily discover where all the difficulty lies. Why does the Arminian, or what we now call the free-willer, wish to find that agency in man for which he contends ? The fact is, he wants it for the sole purpose of making out on the one hand, the justice of the sinner's endless punishment ; and on the other, he wishes to free the divine Being from that cruel character which is given him by the doctrine which makes him the author of the sin for which he condemns the sinner to endless sufferings. The Arminian has not been able to discover, nor has the predestinarian shown him, that could he find in man any agency which he should choose to describe, it would then be necessary to allow that this agency, being constituted by the Creator, must have been designed by him for a definite purpose, which purpose could not fail of being effected. So, after all, he involves himself in the same appalling absurdity with which he confounds his adversary. For there is no moral difference in saying that our heavenly Father is the author of that sin for which he condemns his children to endless suffering, and saying that he is the author of that agency which he designed should eventually terminate in the same result.

But the whole difficulty would be removed at once, if the doctors, on both sides of the controversy, could come to the conclusion to leave out

of the christian creed the hypothesis of endless punishment. To maintain this erroneous proposition, the predestinarian becomes confounded with the relentless cruelty, in which he involves the divine Being ; and to maintain the same offensive doctrine, the Arminian confuses himself with the ignorance, which his doctrine attributes to him who knows all things. What objection could the Arminian bring to the doctrine of predestination, could he first free his own mind from the doctrine of endless punishment, and then find no such error in the system of predestination ? There must surely be something besides the dictates of enlightened reason, and the aspirations of a benevolent heart, which would raise objections to the doctrine which teaches that God predetermined all events, and overrules them all for the ultimate good of all his creatures.

With a view to bring this all-important subject before my hearers this morning, and to furnish some arguments for the support of the right of the case, the text, which has been read, was selected. But the query may arise,—What has the text to do with the subject ? In reply, we say, that the text stands in support of the doctrine, that contends that the cause of what is called evil may be innocent.

In his flight from the unrighteous vengeance of Saul, king of Israel, David, destitute of provision and of armour, came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, who not knowing that his majesty was offended with so worthy a servant as he supposed David to be, accommodated him with a supply of holy bread, as he had no other, and gave him also the sword which David took from Goliath when he slew him. Thus provided, David continued his flight from Saul. But Doeg, the Edomite, was present when the priest accommodated David, and afterwards informed Saul of the fact, and accused Ahimelech to his majesty : The king was enraged against the priest and demanded of him thus.

"Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" It was in vain that Ahimelech pleaded his innocence, saying; "And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me. Let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this less or more." Absolute power, which is not amenable to law, when exercised by enraged majesty, is deaf to all the eloquence of innocence, and dooms to destruction without the semblance of justice, or the feelings of humanity. The following sentence was immediately pronounced: "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house." Such was the odious character of this wicked sentence, that Saul's footmen, when commanded to slay the priests of the Lord, refused. Doeg, in the spirit of his master, accomplished this memorable massacre, and put to death, that day, eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. He moreover destroyed the city of Nob, old and young, male and female, and even the cattle. One son of Ahimelech alone escaped and came to David, and informed him of the whole of this tragedy. David, in reply, told Abiathar that he knew, when he was with his father, that Doeg would inform Saul of what transpired, and told him that he had been the occasion of the death of all the persons of his father's house; but at the same time promised him protection.

Having so far attended to the history, in which our subject is found, we may proceed to examine the moral character of David, in relation to the murderous scene which we have described. Was David the innocent cause of this murder, or was

he the criminal cause? Here there can be but one answer. David was the innocent cause of this outrageous piece of wickedness. But the question will be asked; was there a criminal cause of the same wicked outrage? Here again there can be no doubt. If there had been no criminal design the act could not have been morally wrong. The act of taking life, as well as all other acts, is innocent, or criminal, according to the design of the principal agent, who performs the act. But Saul and Doeg were unquestionably criminal, in relation to this affair; and it is very evident that they were important agents in it.

The discerning hearer will now grow apprehensive that the nice point, that pivot on which this general subject must turn, is going to be either overlooked, or kept out of the argument. It is very clear, that in order for our reasoning to result in showing that God is the innocent cause of all things: it must be shown that he is the innocent cause even of criminality itself. We have no fears on this subject, no wish to hide behind some insolvable mystery. Let us then examine the case of Saul and David. Saul was determined to take the life of David; and such was the strength of this determination and the fury which accompanied it, that whatever seemed to stand in the way to restrain the course of his vengeance, became subject to it. This in Saul was criminal; it was the dictate of envy. David had done nothing at which Saul was offended; but his loyalty to the king, his love of his country's freedom, and above all his sacred regard to the character of the God of Israel, had acquired him a fame, which eclipsed the glory of Saul and kindled the fire of jealousy in his heart.

In the movements of David there appears nothing that was reprehensible. Goliath had for forty days shown himself from the front of the Philistine army, proudly vaunting, and defying the host of Israel. He proposed to decide the fate of a pond.

ing battle by single combat, if the army of Israel could furnish a champion to meet him. But Saul and his men were afraid ; nor did any one possess the courage to accept the challenge. David was then a ruddy youth, whom his father sent to the camp to bear his favour to his sons, who were in the army. When he saw Goliath vapouring in his vanity, and heard him defying the army of Israel ; and when, to his mortification, he saw his own brethren and the whole host of his people shrinking with fear at the profane boasting of the uncircumcised champion, he felt emotions which we can more readily conceive than describe. He was not a moment in deciding, in his mind, that Goliath's challenge ought to be accepted. This was no sooner known by Saul than he made inquiry, and found the youth ready to meet in single combat, this champion who was the terror of Saul and all his men of war. Saul feared for the safety of David, and expostulated with him. He reminded him of his youth, and that he was going to meet a foe who had been a man of war from his youth. But David informed Saul that he had slain a lion and a bear, which attempted to rob his father's flock of a lamb, and that he was confident that God would make that uncircumcised Philistine as one of them. Such was Saul's concern for David that he put his own armour on him, and furnished him with all the defence possible. But David refused all these, and taking his staff and sling, chose five smooth stones out of the brook, with which he fearlessly met and overcame this fearful champion. This David was a Benjamite, and well skilled in the use of the sling ; and with this weapon he prevailed. Now what we desire to have considered here is the perfect innocence of David, in this interesting combat. Saul, the king, was concerned for nothing, as it appears, but for the safety of this beautiful youth. He felt no apprehensions that any prejudice to himself could result from David's success in this case. No doubt,

the sincere desire of his heart was gratified when he saw the champion fall. But when Saul and his victorious army returned in triumph, and the women came out of the cities to meet the king, singing and dancing, and exclaiming, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands, those elements which compose the demon of envy, were immediately called together, and kindled into a fury of horrid mien.

Let us now look at this whole affair ; and let candor judge and decide whether David, by the help of God, in whom he trusted, was not the innocent cause of Saul's deadly envy.—It really seems that the subject is too plain to either need argument, or admit of doubt. But says the hearer ; though this must be allowed, the question arises, wherein does the criminality of Saul's envy consist, if it were the effect of that which was innocent and good ? The answer is ready—Saul's criminality consisted in his designing evil ; and it was this evil design which led him to all the acts of injustice and cruelty which he committed against David and others, on his account. But another question here presents its demands ; and it is one too of high consideration in relation to the general subject. Why does not this argument suppose the same criminality in the divine Being, who is allowed to be the cause of this criminal envy, as it attributes to Saul, in whose breast it burned ? To this weighty question the answer is also ready. It is because the argument contends that the design which the divine Being had in causing this envy in Saul was a good design. The whole was designed and overruled by our heavenly Father for good, and was wholly dictated by that heavenly wisdom which is full of mercy and good fruits, and which is without partiality. We will here allow the objector to urge what to him may seem to be of weight, that as the argument allows that the divine Being intended and caused all the evil which actually took place, by the agency of Saul, if we

argue that the divine Being is innocent in this case, we should also allow the innocency of Saul. But to this we reply : there is a very plain difference in the moral character which the argument attributes to the Creator and to the creature. All the evil which actually took place was designed by the Creator for the good of all concerned ; but in the design of the creature there was not the smallest particle of divine benevolence or good will ; and it is the difference in the moral nature of those opposite designs, which constitutes the moral difference in the characters of the Creator and the creature. If it could be seen that Saul, in all his conduct which we have noticed, was actuated by a purely benevolent disposition, designing the whole for the ultimate good of all whom his acts concerned, and seeing at the same time how this good would be brought about by such means, we should see no cause why his entire innocence should not be allowed. But not being able to find this good design in Saul, nor the least shadow of evidence of its existence, we are compelled to ascribe to him the character of cruel, relentless envy.

The hearer is now, unquestionably, prepared to see that it is absolutely necessary to leave out of our creed the doctrine of infinite evil, or unlimited suffering, as it is impossible for such evil or suffering to be overruled for the good of those who endure it. As our argument contends that God is the innocent cause of the sin which men commit, and maintains this hypothesis on the ground that he designs all this sin and its consequent guilt, condemnation and suffering, for the ultimate good of all, we see that the admission of endless suffering would destroy every vestige of this system of reasoning, as it is not possible to conceive how suffering, which will never end, can result in the benefit of the sufferer. Sound reasoning, on this subject, will moreover show, that as the designing of evil, without intending it for good, constitutes the sinful or criminal cause, by allowing that the divine Be

ing ever was the cause of that which he did not design for ultimate good, we charge him with criminality !

The instructions of the blessed Saviour will assist us in illustrating the principle that the cause of moral evil may be innocent. The following are his words : "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth ? I tell you, nay ; but rather division ; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father ; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother ; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law ; and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." In this passage the Saviour acknowledges that he came to effect divisions in families ; to make fathers and sons foes to each other, and to set at variance mothers and daughters. But we cannot suppose that he meant to accuse himself of being the criminal cause of those deadly feuds and family quarrels ; nor can it be allowed, by any who know his spirit and doctrine, and who love the same, that he was the criminal cause of such unhappy divisions. We find the criminal cause of all such wickedness in the superstition and bigotry of the religious people of those times, in which the gospel was planted in our world. The doctrine of Jesus was as pure as the light of heaven ; its favour was as free as the descending rain ; it fell on the multitude like gentle dew on the grass of the field ; the common people heard him gladly, and wondered at the gracious words which he uttered ; but the bigoted priests, scribes and pharisees, who had made the law of God void by their traditions, found that the doctrine of Jesus, with all its precepts, would sweep away the whole system of their religion, if it should prevail. They were stung with jealousy, and fired with deadly envy against the blessed Son of God,

as was king Saul against David. Hence proceeded that spirit of hostility against the doctrine and religion of Jesus, which was the criminal cause of those unhappy divisions among the people, and which introduced into families the bane of discord and deadly hate.

Here it is necessary to mark the difference between the innocent and the criminal cause. Divine wisdom saw that all this enmity and opposition to the gospel were necessary for the fulfilment of the declarations of the prophets concerning the Messiah, that all things might be fulfilled that were written concerning him. The same divine wisdom designed all this opposition and persecution, which were carried on with such vehemence, for the purpose of promoting the cause of truth, which in its final effects would overcome and subdue the false religion which caused the scribes and pharisees to oppose it. This foreknowledge of God and his benevolent design, in all this vast concern, show most clearly that he was the innocent cause of the whole. But on the part of the active agents, who opposed and persecuted the gospel and those who promulgated it, we find no benevolent, no gracious design or purpose; but the most heated jealousy and inflamed envy which ever burned in the breast of the wicked. This spirit, and design to oppose and overthrow the truth, prove, as clearly as any thing can be proved, that criminality was found in the enemies of Christ. If on due examination we were able to discover that the chief priests, the scribes and pharisees, together with all who opposed Christ and his doctrine, understood that their exertions were necessary for the promotion of this doctrine, and that they designed it for that purpose, it would prove that they were the friends of Christ and his religion, and would establish their innocence beyond all dispute. But their evil design proves that they were the criminal cause of the miseries which their opposition to the religion of Jesus produced; but the gracious design of our heavenly Father, in

relation to all this enmity, and the acknowledged fact that he overruled the whole for the good of all concerned, prove that he was the innocent cause of all these events.

Another case, recorded in scripture, which presents our general subject in a light most convincing, is that of the envy and enmity of the brethren of Joseph towards him. A careful examination of the circumstances which produced their envy will quickly arrive at an understanding of their innocence. God, in his gracious wisdom inspired Joseph with dreams which he, in all the simplicity and innocence of childhood, related in the family circle. The dreams were easily and quickly understood by his brethren to indicate the future exaltation of Joseph, and the humble dependence of his brethren and their submission to his authority. For these dreams his brethren hated him; and the fire of their envy burned with such vehemence as to overpower the sweet sympathies of kindred affections, and to effect in their minds the murderous design of destroying their brother. If wickedness ever presented dyes of an appalling cast, we find those colours in the deception which those brethren practiced on their venerable father, when they presented him with the bloody coat of his son, of his beloved Joseph. How hard must have been their hearts not to relent when they saw the anguish of their father, and heard his exclamation, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces,—I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Only go one step back of the envy which was kindled in the breasts of those unhappy brethren, and all is peaceful innocence.—God was the innocent cause of this envy by inspiring Joseph with such dreams. Joseph was an innocent cause of the same envy by relating his dreams to the family. This envy was the criminal cause of that conduct which effectually destroyed the felicity of the sacred family circle, drowned the holy patriarch in sorrow's

dark waters, and ingulphed the wicked perpetrators of this outrage in guilt and condemnation.

As the causes which produced the wickedness which was practiced, by the brethren of Joseph, against him, were innocent, and as the whole of this wickedness was overruled, by divine wisdom and goodness, unto a benevolent end, it seems to furnish incontestible proof of the principle for which we have contended in this discourse. But in order to see how this general argument fully and effectually does away this doctrine of endless punishment for sin, and thereby removes the great and weighty objection, which lies in the mind of the professed Arminian, against the doctrine of predestination, and against allowing that God is the cause of all events, it is necessary to show that sin is designed by our heavenly Father, not only for good, on some broad and general principle, but it is necessary to show that it is designed and overruled for the good of those who are its criminal agents. A most clear and convincing manifestation of this infinitely important fact we have in the case of Joseph's brethren, to which we have in part attended. It is seen that in consequence of their envy and hatred they sold their brother to merchants who again sold him for a slave in Egypt; and it is also very evident that in consequence of his becoming a servant in the house of Potiphar he became the subject of the persecution of his wicked mistress, who caused him to be cast into prison; and it is also evident that his being thus confined was the cause of his acquaintance with the chief baker and chief butler, whose dreams he interpreted, which was the cause of his being brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, which none of the wise men of Egypt could possibly solve. This astonishing instance of the wisdom of Joseph was the cause of his advancement to authority and power next to the throne, which proved an incalculable blessing to all Egypt and the whole surrounding country,

by seasonably laying up in store sufficient corn to sustain the inhabitants of the land during seven years of famine. Thus we see that the envy and wickedness of Joseph's brethren, bitter as gaul and wormwood as they flowed, in a perturbed, deadly stream, at first, carried immense blessings into Egypt and the adjoining country. But were those envious, wicked brethren excluded from the favours which resulted to thousands of others? No; we see them coming into Egypt to buy corn for their wanting families; they bow to Joseph before they know him, and obtain a supply of the staff of life at his hands without knowing that it was he whom they hated and sold, who thus opened his hand to their relief. But when he made himself known to his brethren, with what tenderness and affection did he address them, saying; "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." And moreover, even after the death of their father, when these brethren feared what Joseph might do to them for their trespass against him, and came and fell down before him and craved his forgiveness, he kindly replied; "Fear not—ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive—fear not; I will nourish you and your little ones." In this reply Joseph sets up the doctrine which we are endeavouring to exemplify. "*Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.*" What did God mean unto good? Answer—the very evil which they thought against Joseph. What good did God intend by that evil which those brethren intended? Answer—that of saving many thousands of lives, and the lives of those brethren with the rest. The whole family of promise was preserved from famine by the consequences resulting from that envy which moved those brethren to sell Joseph.

If our heavenly Father has given us to understand, and to know, that it is consistent with his moral perfections to design and overrule the evil of sin, in any instance, for general good, and even for the good of those who are criminal agents in it; it is by no means necessary that we should be able to discern the good which he designs by every instance of moral evil, in order to justify us in believing that he does design and overrule all sin in the same gracious manner. He, in compassion to us his weak and erring children, has given us abundant evidence of that blessed truth, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." In this doctrine we may find rest to our souls, and infinite reason to be thankful to God and humbly joyful in his presence.

We feel unwilling to leave this subject, until we notice a very popular objection which its opposers urge against it. They say, if this doctrine be allowed, we may do evil that good may come. After this same manner did the enemies of the apostles slander them, reporting that they said; "Let us do evil, that good may come."

In replying to this unwise objection we will ask the opposer to make the trial, that he may convince himself. What has he got to do? He is to do evil that good may come. Then his design in what he does must be that good may come.—But this very design constitutes his act morally good; for the moral character of every act is determined by the design of the actor. If Joseph's brethren had seen into futurity, and with a clear understanding had comprehended the necessity of Joseph's going into Egypt, and had sold him for the purpose of bringing his dreams to pass, in compliance with the wisdom and design of God, there certainly would have been no enmity in their hearts towards their brother, nor moral evil in what they did. And there is another thing which the objector ought to know, and that is, that if Joseph's brethren had fully believed that God

would overrule their envy and wickedness towards their brother, for his future exaltation, and their own benefit, it would have entirely overcome their envy and washed away the whole of their sin.

That the sentiment which we have endeavoured to support in this discourse, may be fully believed and realized; and that it may have and exert a happy moral influence on our hearts and lives, may God in mercy add his blessing.

SERMON XXIV.

COMMENDATION AND REPROOF OF UNITARIANS.

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, SUNDAY, NOV. 29, 1829.

REVELATION, II. 4.

"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee."

In the epistle to the angel of the church of Ephesus, we have an example worthy to be imitated. Those things for which that church was worthy of commendation, were first mentioned, and received their due approbation; after which, the writer says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." And then he proceeds faithfully to set forth those faults which deserved to be corrected.

It is our design, this evening, to follow this excellent example, while endeavouring to perform the labours which the congregation has reason to expect. If we find it a duty to inform a beloved friend of some faults which it is his interest to reform, both love and prudence will dictate this commendable method. We must first carefully mention his good qualities; with due caution remind him of his virtues, and dwell at reasonable length on what, in his general character, we find worthy of our sincere approbation; and even when we advance to mention those faults which we wish to reform, it must be done with reference to the before mentioned virtues, that as the character is so nearly as it should be, our friend may be induced to render the whole consistent, by reformation.

Our Unitarian brethren have just claims to our respects and approbation for many things, which both duty and inclination induce us to acknowledge. They hold many, and indeed the important, points of the christian faith accordingly as we believe they are revealed in the sacred scriptures.

These points of doctrine, at least some of them, we shall set forth, and endeavour to accompany them with some of the abundant proof, which the divine word affords.

1st. The particular tenet which gives them their name, as a denomination, is the strict *unity* of God, in contradistinction from the doctrine, known in the church, by the name of *Trinity*, which teaches that there are, in the God-head, three distinct persons, who are co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal. That our Unitarian brethren are fully supported by Scripture authority, in their belief in the strict unity of the God-head, we entertain no doubts. As proof of this important doctrine, we adduce the following: Moses, who was commissioned by heaven to teach the house of Israel the true worship, uniformly taught the people as is expressed Deut. vi. 4, 5, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Now to us it appears reasonable; that if the true worship required a belief in a trinity of persons, in the God-head, Moses would have stated this fact, in place of stating what we have just recited. We are unable to see why the doctrine of the trinity was not taught by Moses if it be now the duty of religious teachers to insist on its truth. If it be said, that the doctrine of the trinity is more specially taught in the christian scriptures and dispensation, this at once directs us to the teachings of Jesus, who in reply to the scribe, of his day, who asked him, "which is the first commandment of all?" said; "The first of all the commandments is, hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment." If Jesus had intended to teach the doctrine of three persons in the God-head, as an improvement on the unity of God as taught by Moses, we see not why he should use the very words of Moses, which evidently disallows such doctrine. Nor can we reasonably believe that it is now any more the duty of christian ministers to insist on the doctrine of a trinity, than it was the duty of the divine master so to do. We may further add, that St. Paul was particular in giving instructions on our present subject, especially in his communication to Timothy, where he says, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." But trinitarian doctors have insisted that this *man* Christ Jesus, is essentially God, being what they term the second person in the holy trinity. And yet this man told the people that he could do nothing of himself, and that his Father was greater than he.

2d. Our Unitarian brethren have travelled through the dark regions of that false divinity, which for ages has taught people to believe that it was not consistant with the divine perfections, for God to forgive the transgressions of mankind without first requiring and receiving a sacrifice of real sufferings, in room of inflicting the penalty of his broken law on the offenders; and they have happily arrived at the rational, and scriptural truth of the divine favour as flowing from the nature of the divine Being, without being induced by any creature act or suffering. They have justly discarded the whole doctrine of vicarious sufferings, and with eminent abilities have maintained the *fatherly* character of the great Creator. They understand and ably maintain the vast utility of the life, preaching, sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus, as means in the wisdom of God, of planting and supporting true religion in our world, but they do not

believe that our heavenly Father's love is the purchase of the Saviour's sufferings. Such doctrine they justly view as dishonourable to the Father of mercies, from whom every good gift, and every perfect gift descends. In these sentiments we believe that they are justified by the general theme of scripture testimony, and in a very clear and forcible manner by the following passages : John iii. 16, 17, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved." 1 John iv. 9, 10, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." By such testimony, we are certified that whatever benefit Jesus is to mankind, that benefit is the *effect* and not the *cause* of our heavenly Father's love.

3d. Our Unitarian brethren are deserving of high approbation, and even of gratitude, for their successful labours in disproving the unreasonable, unscriptural and heart-hardening doctrine of particular election and reprobation. Their doctors have, in their labours on this subject, contributed largely to open people's eyes, and to enable them to see that there is no scripture authority for believing, that the Father of our spirits, from all eternity elected some of the human family, and ordained them to a state of endless felicity ; while he reprobated the rest to endless, unmerciful sufferings. So very successful have their labours been, in disproving a doctrine so dishonourable to God, so revolting to the best feelings of the human heart, so withering to future prospects, so blighting to the charities of true religion, and so wonderfully productive of illiberal feelings and persecu-

tion, that the misguided defenders and supporters of those partial sentiments have grown cautious, and are seldom heard to advance those tenets in public or private ; and some have found it most convenient to deny them altogether. In their belief of the impartiality of the divine benevolence, we believe they are well and abundantly supported by scripture authority, as well as by the general economy of a most gracious Providence. We read that "the Lord is good unto all ; and his tender mercies are over all his works." And again we are assured that he is no respecter of persons.

4th. Our Unitarian brethren maintain a far more wholesome doctrine, respecting the moral state in which we are introduced into the present world, than that which is held by their orthodox opponents. The doctrine known by the name of *total depravity*, which has for ages been supported in the church ; by which people have been taught to believe, that man's whole nature is but a mass of moral corruption, and wholly incapable of thinking a good thought, or of performing a single good action, and is the object of the divine displeasure, and exposed to endless wrath, our Unitarian brethren utterly deny. In opposition to a sentiment, so discouraging to virtuous and pious endeavours, they successfully maintain that sin has not changed our nature from an object of the divine love, to an object of divine wrath ; but that we stand in relation to our Creator, as our children to us their parents ; that God loves even the disobedient ; and treats them with kindness and pity even when he chastises them for transgressions. In this most rational doctrine they are evidently supported by the current testimony of the sacred writings. The divine Teacher directs us to pray to our Father in heaven, and assures us that we have more to expect from him, than children can receive from earthly parents.

5th. Our Unitarian brethren have far more rational and scriptural views of the doctrine of re-

generation, than those for which their orthodox opposers contend. As they do not allow the doctrine of total depravity, so they see no necessity of a radical change of our nature, by regeneration. They very justly view the opinions, maintained by their opposers, on this subject, as tending to consequences, by no means friendly to the growth of rational piety. People who believe that their very nature is evil, and that it is not in their power to please God, can derive from such sentiments no encouragement to obedience; but are naturally led to say, we must wait until God changes us, by his irresistible grace, before we can serve him at all. And even those who fancy themselves born again, are by no means secure from that pernicious vanity, which induced a Pharisee of old to thank God that he was not like other men. And if a careful and impartial survey of human society be made, no radical change of man's nature will be discovered. Our Unitarian brethren believe, and believe correctly, that true religion may be taught to men as easily as any other science. And that when its moral precepts are understood, they are such as the heart of man will naturally approve.

6th. Our Unitarian brethren fully acknowledge the perfection of all the divine attributes, and readily subscribe to their entire infinity. They believe that God is unbounded in goodness, almighty in power, unlimited in wisdom and knowledge; that he designs the happiness of all his creatures, and governs the universe for no other purpose than its happiness.

7th. In addition to all these most rational and heavenly sentiments, our Unitarian brethren maintain the right of individuals to exercise their own reason, and read and study the scriptures for themselves; to form their own opinions respecting the doctrine they reveal, and to be perfectly free and independent in openly professing their religious sentiments. And they moreover contend, that no professing christian ought to be deprived of the

privileges of church fellowship and christian communion, merely on account of his peculiar opinions. They are so liberal as to be willing to exchange ministerial services with their orthodox opposers; and earnestly contend that it is inconsistent with christian liberty, and christian charity to exclude them from their pulpits.

We have not time to enumerate all those things, for which we think our Unitarian brethren, as a denomination, are worthy of commendation; but if we take a comprehensive view of those particulars which have been noticed, we shall, undoubtedly, be led to marvel that they have made such extensive and valuable improvements in the science of divinity.

They have renounced the unreasonable, perplexing doctrine of the trinity, and have driven its most able defenders to make concessions which amount to its entire renunciation. They have laid aside, as an uncomfortable, worn out garment, the whole scheme of vicarious sufferings, and of placating the wrath of an offended God; and have made the happy discovery of a compassionate, kind and merciful Father in the supreme ruler of the universe. The doctrine of partial election and eternal reprobation they have dismissed with its deserved disapprobation. They have rejected the old notion of man's entire depravity, and hold that he is capable of moral improvement, in knowledge and holiness; and in place of the visionary notions about a radical change of our nature, they insist on the more reasonable doctrine of a christian and virtuous education. And they moreover acknowledge all the divine perfections of our heavenly Father, believing in his infinite wisdom, power and goodness, and in the entire impartiality of his love to his creatures.

Here we seem to come to a pause. The query seems to crowd on the mind, how it is possible for one, who professes to be a believer in, and a defender of, the doctrine of Universal Salvation, to

find any fault with these sentiments, or with the denomination which professes them ?

Christian friends, we find no fault with these sentiments. We believed them all, and endeavoured to persuade others of their truth and importance, long before the controversy between the orthodox and Unitarians produced a division in this country.

The hearer will ask again, if the statements which have been made, concerning doctrine, do not, in the most plain and direct manner, amount to real Universalism ? We reply, that in our opinion they do. And it is known also to the public, that the orthodox contend that Unitarians, in holding such sentiments, are in fact Universalists.

Here we repeat our text : " Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee." Worthy things are spoken, in the context, of the church of Ephesus, for which they received the approbation of him, who " holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks." But after all, there was somewhat against that church ; and notwithstanding we find in the doctrines, maintained by our Unitarian brethren, more to approve than we have had time to mention, we think there is somewhat against them. And this we shall now proceed to point out.

1st. As the Unitarian doctors, some of them at least, are not a whit behind the first in the world, as to natural talents, or acquired abilities, there seems to be no ground for supposing that they do not know, that the tenets of their faith, which they openly avow, both in their preaching and writings, do in fact necessarily lead to the belief of Universal Salvation ; yet they, as a denomination, will not own that they believe it. So far from being ingenuous enough to profess openly the blessed doctrine of Universal Salvation, they generally so arrange and manage their public discourses as not only to keep this doctrine out of sight ; but to cause the unlearned hearers to believe that their

preachers disbelieve it. We acknowledge that this charge is not venial ; and it is stated with feelings of reluctance. Nothing short of indubitable conviction of its being a fact, and a common practice, could compel us to state this wrong. We have been pained to witness the truth of this charge with our own ears, times not a few. After the learned preacher had, in a plain and lucid manner, laid down some of the great principles of divinity, and after drawing the most important inferences in favour of the doctrine of Universal Salvation ; and when the cheering light of this blessed doctrine shone about us, and in us, to such a degree as to lead us to think the preacher was about to remove the vail from his congregation at once, all of a sudden a deep wound was inflicted by the artful turn of the preacher, who for fear his congregation would believe him to be a full Universalist, reminds them, that notwithstanding these principles and inferences, we must remember, that " without holiness no man can see the Lord ;—Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish ;—Who will render to every man according to his deeds ;—He that believeth not the son shall not see life : but the wrath of God abideth on him ;—He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned ;—Jesus hath solemnly said, These shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal." Thus, by repeating one or two such passages at the conclusion of a discourse, the preacher satisfies his hearers in general that he by no means believes in the doctrine of Universal Salvation, or would at all encourage them to believe it. Though he is perfectly satisfied that such scriptures are, in no proper sense, opposed to the doctrine of Universal Salvation, he is fully persuaded that his hearers so understand them, by the force of their education ; and he is willing to make use of their ignorance to keep them still in darkness !

2d. Notwithstanding the purity of the great, leading principles maintained by Unitarian preachers, they rather avoid them in their common preaching, seldom bring them as the necessary food for their congregations, rather choosing to employ themselves in speculations of their own curious inventions, about a future state of rewards and punishments! If we request them to produce any scripture authority for such notions, they will, in place of bringing scripture proof, undertake to justify such notions, by reasoning, as they say, from analogy. They take for granted that vice is not sufficiently punished, nor virtue sufficiently recompensed in this life; of course, there must be a state hereafter of righteous retribution, or the divine Being will never be able to vindicate the impartiality of his justice. Thus with their speculations, unsupported by one word of divine authority, they invade the world to come, and amuse themselves and their hearers with the curious texture of a web, both the warp and woof of which is of their own invention. The moment we examine what this speculation takes for granted, and on which the whole is founded, it vanishes from our sight. If it be a fact that the divine Being does not, in this world, fully punish sin, and reward righteousness, it necessarily follows, that judging from all which we know, he never will. Suppose we should undertake to maintain that the supreme Being is really unjust, in his moral government; what better proof would be required than acknowledged facts? We have a history of man in this world for almost six thousand years; and if this whole history fairly make out that wickedness is not sufficiently punished, nor righteousness adequately rewarded, here on earth, how many more thousand years would it require, for the same neglect, in administering rewards and punishments, to convince us that the Ruler of the universe is not careful in the concerns of justice?

Another view, of what these divines take for

granted, at once discovers its most condemning defects. If we say that wickedness is not sufficiently punished, nor righteousness adequately rewarded, in this world, we must allow that the necessary consequences of wickedness are not so evil as wickedness itself; and that the necessary consequences of righteousness are not so good as righteousness. What then, we ask, is bad enough to punish wickedness, if wickedness is not? And on the other hand, we ask, what is good enough to reward righteousness, if righteousness is not? If by going into the future world, the wicked should increase in wickedness, and the righteous in righteousness, this would only throw divine justice farther in arrears, which would refute the doctrine of this ingenious speculation. While feeding on such unrealities, who can believe they are eating that bread of God, which came down from heaven to give life to the world?

3d. Such are the exalted notions which these brethren entertain of the moral improvements which they are making, that it is not unfrequent that they preach sermons on the fruitful subject, in which they endeavour to convey to their hearers an understanding of the immense distance which they are likely to be advanced in the future world, before their fellow beings, who, in consequence of their sinful neglects, in this world, will have to suffer in the world to come; while they for their vigilance here are to enjoy indescribable felicity! A single hint, indicating, that when this mortal shall have put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up of life, all men will be equally glorious, equally righteous, and equally happy, is sure to meet with most pointed scorn. To such combustible stubble, suppose we touch one living coal of divine truth. Let us suppose the following case: A wife, who possesses every christian excellence, that woman, in this world can possess, and whose domestic and social virtues have arrived at the highest perfection attainable in a mortal state,

should be informed, by her *godly* minister, just as she was going out of the world, that in the world to which she was going, she would enjoy the satisfaction of the divine presence, of walking the golden streets of paradise, in company with saints and angels, and of beholding the face of her Redeemer for ever; while her husband, for his worldly-mindedness, and for his neglect of religion in this world, would be condemned to wander in darkness, in sorrow and woe. To a heart full of love divine, would this be a rose or a thorn? What answer would these brethren return to the question, which the Saviour put to Simon, the pharisee? "And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" What, my friends, shall we think of those moral and religious attainments, which give their possessors the assurance of seeing their fellow-creatures far less happy, in the future, eternal world, than they hope to be themselves? If they loved their neighbours as themselves, would this boasted assurance be a source of joy, or sorrow? However unlike christianity all this may be, it is, as it seems, the prize of their high calling, the laurel for which they contend, the crown for which they fight! Let such arrogance be rebuked with the mild counsel of the humble Jesus: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls."

4th. As the telling of those we love, the faults we discover in them, is a painful as well as an unthankful duty, we must be excused, for the present, after we have named one more fault, the correction of which would do them great honour. Among those commendable things which were named, in approbation of our Unitarian brethren, the hearer will recollect their liberality towards those christians, who differ from them in opinions. They have been labouring with all *their* christian meekness, for years, to persuade their orthodox

opponents to extend to them the right hand of christian fellowship, and to consent to reciprocate ministerial exchanges. We have read their learned and forcible arguments in favour of this brotherly practice; and we have also read what their orthodox opposers have urged against it; and we are fully satisfied that our Unitarian brethren have in reality the best of the argument. Now if the profession of liberality, without the practice, could make these brethren rich, in the righteousness of God, the angels of heaven might envy their attainments! Will they exchange desks with Universalists? By no means. What is the reason? Because, in some points of doctrine we do not come exactly to their views. As to doctrine generally, they will allow that we are much nearer them, than are their orthodox brethren, whom they are constantly inviting to exchange! Now if they, like the orthodox, were conscientious in refusing to exchange desks with those who hold doctrines opposed to their own, then would they act according to their profession, and would be consistent with themselves. But how are they to be justified in making those pretensions to liberality, while in fact it is not real? Is this christianity? Is it genuine honesty? Is it such practice as this that is to give them such exalted stations, as they anticipate, in the coming world? We beseech them either to discontinue the profession of liberality, or by their practice to convince us that they are sincere in it. How will this appear in the history of these times, an half a century hence? We do not complain of this inconsistency and illiberality, which are so evident in the conduct of our brethren, because they are any particular inconvenience to us. Their character, as a denomination, is affected by these improprieties; and it is for their interest, and for the promotion of sincere, christian liberality, that we call on them to consider these things, and to make provision for as early a date of their reformation as possible.

To conclude: If we have stated any of these wrongs in a manner too pointed, or have given them a colouring more unfavourable than christian charity will warrant, we thus early ask forgiveness. We have not stated these defects, which we think we see in our brethren, without recollecting that we ourselves are also faulty. And we humbly ask them to use towards us the same faithfulness, which we have thought it our duty to exercise towards them. Let them do it in kindness and in brotherly love, and they shall receive our acknowledgments for the favour.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches."

SERMON XXV.

EVIL OF STRIVING AGAINST GOD.

ISAIAH, XLV. 9.

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"

Our religious opposers often accuse us of selecting those passages which speak of the divine goodness, of the extensiveness of salvation, and of its ultimate success in bringing all men to the enjoyment of holiness and happiness; while with equal caution we avoid speaking of such portions of the divine testimony as contain expressions of wrath against the wicked, of the woes which await transgressors, and the final condemnation of the impenitent. For doing thus we are not only blamed, but solemnly admonished.

Although it is natural for the accused to endeavour to justify themselves, we are not entirely confident that no degree of blame attaches to our manner of preaching, relative to the subject of the before-mentioned accusation. It is not very unlikely that we are in default, in not enforcing the divine threatenings, so much as their truly awful importance demands. Yet, if our accusers will be candid, we think our wrong is, at least, partly extenuated by a fault of their own, which has been the cause of it. We certainly have never evaded the enforcement of the divine threatenings, with more caution, than they have observed in neglecting the gracious and precious promises of God's favour to sinners of our race. It is, moreover, a fact, which merits attention, that

their long established habit, of selecting every threatening, which they could find in the scriptures, and every passage, which they could explain into a threatening, as a foundation on which they have raised that tremendous edifice, which they call damnation, was long since the approximate cause that induced us to search the scriptures, that we might ascertain whether they did not contain something more honourable to our Creator, and more consoling to man, than had been usually held forth to the people. Compelled as we were by such means to search for the *great and precious* promises of divine favour, who can wonder that their multiplicity and abundant riches should absorb our minds, and prompt us to bestow that labour in setting them forth to the people, which had been carefully and studiously withheld, by those whose labours had so long been devoted to explain and enforce scripture threatenings infinitely beyond not only the utmost reach of their own proper meaning, but even beyond the reach of the divine goodness?

Hoping that the foregoing remarks will be accepted as some apology for our not sufficiently attending to the woes and threatenings recorded in the faithful word, we shall proceed, faithfully to portray the woe pronounced in our text, and to cause its desired influence to be exerted in a salutary and profitable manner. But before we can advance to a correct and clear view of the nature and extent of this woe, we must attempt a survey of the goodness of God towards his creatures, which is the first general subject, that our text suggests to the observing mind.

If the question be asked, how our text brings this momentous subject into view? we answer: If the designs and economy of our Creator were inimical to us, if they were not directed for our benefit, the only way by which we could serve our own interest, and promote our happiness, would be to oppose our Creator's designs and means.

This subject may be illustrated by the following suppositions. The parent of a family of children, having no regard for the welfare of his offspring, arranges his whole economy in respect to them, in such a manner as to deprive them of all enjoyment, and to subject them to the most severe slavery and even sufferings, for the purpose of indulging himself in voluptuousness. In such a case, should those unhappy children fully acquiesce in the designs and schemes of their cruel parent, they would thereby promote their own wretchedness, and give success to the means which were employed to render them miserable. Under such circumstances, the only way by which they could be beneficial to themselves, would conflict with the unmerciful purposes of their heartless father. And if they could succeed in circumventing his schemes, they might thereby subserve their own interest ; and in place of bringing on them a woe, might avert it.

But let us reverse our supposition. A kind and loving father, having no designs, respecting his children, but such as embrace their best interests and happiness, imposes no duties, no services, no restraints but such as he knows are indispensable for the purpose of promoting their felicity, and of rendering them as blest as possible. In this case, should any or all of these children be so blind as not to understand that their happiness was the end of their father's law, and the sure result of obedience to his requirements ; should they erroneously believe, that disobedience would procure their enjoyment ; and, in consequence of this mistake, should proceed to strive with their kind and provident father, how evident it is that this strife would bring them woe !

By the light reflected from the foregoing suppositions we clearly discern the goodness of our Creator set forth in our text. And it appears to be evident, that in order to have a full and correct view of the woe, which striving with our Maker

brings upon us, we must, at the same time, have a clear and open view of the divine goodness, against which our strife has been preposterously directed.

By referring to the divine requirements, we not only confirm what we have already advanced, but we bring our leading and major subject more clearly into view. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Let us carefully inquire what the command to love God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind implies, respecting the divine goodness? 1st. It implies that there is no quality or attribute in God that is not lovely in its nature. For it would be unreasonable to require us to love that which is not lovely. 2d. It implies that, in relation to us, God is as good, in all respects, as we could possibly desire him to be, on a full discovery of his character. For if by a true knowledge of the divine attributes it should appear that anything is wanting in our Creator, which could in the least advance our rational enjoyments, it would be impossible for us to love him to the extent of the requirement. If we should discover any want of wisdom to contrive and plan for our best good, or any want of will to do so, or any want of power to carry into effect such a will, there would exist in us a corresponding defect of the love required. And it would be equally as impossible for us to supply such defect in our love, as it would be unreasonable and arbitrary to require us to do it. 3d. The requirement, under consideration, implies that our Creator loves us with all his heart and mind. For he could not, with the least propriety, require us to love him without any reservation, if a reservation existed in his love toward us.—Nothing but

love can require love, nor can it ask for more than it gives. Any one may test the soundness of this reasoning by the exercises of his own affections. If you dislike your neighbour, and harbour enmity in your heart against him, you have no desire that the neighbour you hate should love you, and seek to do you good. Should he do so, and succeed in convincing you of the fact, you would find all your inimical designs frustrated, your enmity removed, and your hard heart dissolved into contrition.

By again recurring to the divine commands, we shall be further confirmed in our arguments, in favour of the fulness of our Maker's goodness. If what our Creator required of us were irksome to perform; if it gave us distress and pain to yield obedience; if the yoke were ponderous, and the burden heavy, we might rightly infer, that our happiness was not the design of the requirement. But we find, on the most careful examination, that if the Creator had no other end to accomplish than to raise our felicity to the highest possible point, no means would be better suited to such a purpose than obedience to the two commandments, on which hang all the law and the prophets.

If we keep the goodness of our Creator in constant view, as that goodness is manifested in his requirements, we shall at once understand what it is which constitutes a strife with our Maker: and likewise the nature and extent of the woe which such strife is likely to bring upon us.

To strive with our Maker is to strive against goodness itself; it is to strive against our own happiness; it is to hate that which is infinitely lovely; it is to oppose the means which are designed to make us blest. In short, it is to hate God and our fellow creatures. As our highest happiness consists in loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves; so our happiness must always correspond with our short coming of this duty; and the severity of the woe,

which our strife procures, will be heavy or light, as the heat of our strife shall wax, or wane.

We now have our subject in such a shape that we may easily illustrate it by referring to instances recorded in the scriptures.

In kindness to the family of the patriarch Jacob, God designed that Joseph's brethren and the whole family should become dependent on him. This purpose he revealed in those wonderful and significant dreams, which being related, stung those brethren with envy, and raised in them a strife against their Maker. That which God designed for their temporal salvation, they, in their ignorance and wrath, were determined to prevent. As their strife was against the goodness of God, so it led them on to violate his divine command, which required them to love their brother; and their acts towards him of lawless violence, brought them into distress and trouble, which exactly corresponded with the magnitude and intenseness of their strife against God and their brother.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, because he neither loved God nor his neighbours, strove with his Maker, oppressed the Israelites with cruel servitude and barbarous edicts, by which he brought on himself and on his people woes which corresponded with the heinous character of the strife in which he engaged. Had he loved his Maker with all his heart, he would have obeyed his command to let his people go; or had he loved that people as he loved himself, he would not have afflicted them with cruel bondage and merciless edicts.

David, king of Israel, forgetful of the goodness of God, and regardless of the command to love his neighbour as himself, strove against that benign law which requires of all men to do unto others as they would be done unto, and in his strife committed crimes most heinous in the sight of God and man, by which he brought on himself woes of a character perfectly suited to the nature of his strife which procured them.

Absalom, the son of David, so departed from the law of love, that he strove against God, hated his father, and raised a conspiracy and a rebellion, which, for a season, drove his father from Jerusalem, and from his beloved Zion. But this strife gathered a woeful storm of disastrous war, which burst upon him, and on his deluded followers, in the wood of Ephraim, where he lost his life, and where twenty thousand of Israel found their graves.

Look at Abimelech, who in murderous strife slew his brethren, three score and ten persons, at Ophia, that he might quietly and prosperously reign over the Shechemites. In thus doing he strove with his Maker; he trampled the law of God beneath his feet, which were swift to shed blood. The Shechemites also were his partners in blood and guilt. But who can strive with their Maker and prosper? A fire came out from Abimelech and devoured the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and a fire came out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devoured Abimelech. "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: And upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal."

It is of importance that we rightly understand, and clearly discern from whence the woe comes, which is sure to fall on him who striveth with his Maker. It is true that the scripture informs us that God "rendered," &c., but where did the fire come from that devoured the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo? It came out from Abimelech. Where did the fire come from that devoured Abimelech? It came out from the men of Sechem and the house of Millo. It is true that our Makar renders to every one according to his deeds; but this he does in the economy which he has established in the laws of nature, according

to which 'men give into your bosom the same measure that ye mete.'

Assisted by his wife Jezebel, who was as impious and artful in contriving a wicked strife against God, as he was willing to follow her bloody devices, Ahab, king of Israel, involved himself in a course of wicked abominations, which brought on him and Jezebel the woe pronounced by the prophet Elijah, which gave his "blood to the dogs, in the place where he slew his neighbour; and the body of Jezebel to the dogs by the well Jezreel." Such measures as they meted, men rendered into their bosoms.

The vehement and memorable-strife that Haman raised against the divine command, which required him to love his neighbour as himself, and which hurried him on in his wicked and bloody purpose to destroy all the Jews, that he might satiate the malicious revenge which rankled in his corrupt heart against Mordecai, who sat in the King's gate, brought upon his head an exemplary woe, which should serve as an awful admonition to deter us from engaging in a like conflict. Even before he became in the least apprehensive for the safety of his own life, and while he thought he could boast of his vast riches, his numerous family, the confidence of his majesty the king, and even that of the Queen, so heavy was woe resting on him, that he told his friends and Zeresh his wife, "all this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." So true is it, that there is no peace to the wicked; that even while strife against our Maker seems to be in flattering success, a deadly woe cankers and corrodes all our pleasures, and throws a portentous gloom over future prospects. But Haman's strife against his Maker raised a gallows for his own neck, fifty cubits high, where it terminated his miserable life.

Another truly awful instance of strife against our Maker, we find in the enmity of the religious

Jews against Jesus and his gospel. The Scribes and Pharisees, the doctors of the law, with the whole estate of the elders, and the high priest at their head, were deeply engaged in this most cruel strife. They saw in Jesus, a friend to publicans and sinners ; they heard his gracious words of pardoning mercy ; they saw vast multitudes following him, who had never conformed to their traditions ; all this kindled in their hearts the fire of jealousy, envy and hatred, which were all blown to a flame, by such faithful reproofs as we find recorded in that last address, which Jesus delivered in the temple, to his mortal foes. "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," is many times repeated in one chapter ; and the abominations which those hypocrites practiced are stated in direct charges against them, as follows : "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.—Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence of make long prayers : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.—Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte ; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.—Ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.—Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.—Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." These and other like charges the faithful and true witness brought against the enemies of his blessed gospel, who went on in their strife against their Maker, until they imbrued their hands in the blood of Jesus, and in the blood of his disciples, filling up the measure of their fathers, and

preparing themselves for the woes which soon came upon them, in the dire destruction of their city and temple, in the slaughter of many millions of the Jews, and the final dispersion of that ancient people. So violent, so perversely wicked, was the strife in which the enemies of Jesus were engaged, and so truly awful were the woes which he saw gathering like a dark cloud, over Jerusalem, that he wept over the city, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee : and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."

It is a truth, which we ought always to keep in view, that the woes which striving against our Maker is sure to bring upon us, are those of our own procuring ; they consist in wrath, which we, according to the hardness of our hearts, treasure up to ourselves, against the day of wrath. It is our wicked hearts and polluted hands which are employed in surcharging, with vengeance, the dense cloud which must burst on our heads. Jesus and all his saints may weep over us, they may pity our madness and our strife with our Maker, but the woe must come. God is a fountain of living waters ; and if we strive against them and forsake them, these waters do not pursue us with drought and parch our lips with thirst ; but we hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

These truths Jesus very clearly set forth in that beautiful, and well adjusted, and properly applied parable of the two sons. On the one hand, there was a multitude of publicans and sinners, who seemed to come to him as lost sheep to a shepherd,

or as a prodigal child to a compassionate father ; on the other hand stood the Pharisees and Scribes, murmuring, and accusing him of receiving sinners and eating with them. In his reply, Jesus represented the humble, penitent publicans and sinners by the younger son, who having obtained his patrimony, left his father ; and soon spent his substance in riotous living. In his poverty he endeavored to supply the cravings of hunger by the meanest services ; but after all his fruitless endeavours, he found himself perishing with hunger. In this forlorn condition he exclaimed, " how many hired servants are there in my father's house, who have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." He now comes to the resolution to go home to his father, humble and contrite. He goes ; his father receives him kindly, cloths him in the best robe, puts shoes on his feet, a ring on his hand, kills the fatted calf, orders music and dancing, saying, " this my son was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found." The Pharisees and Scribes, who murmured because he received sinners, Jesus represented by the elder son, in the following words : " Now, his elder son was in the field ; and, as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.—And he called one of the servants, and asked him what these things meant ? And he said unto him, thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in ; therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he, answering, said to his father, Lo these many years do I serve thee ; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment ; and thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends ; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make

merry and be glad ; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found."

In the parable now under consideration, we find two instances, which represent two sorts of strife against our Maker ; and the woes which belong to them, respectively, are clearly set forth. All the time, in which the prodigal was wasting his estate, he was striving against all the wise and salutary councils and advice which a prudent and experienced father had given him. The father did not pursue his wicked son in wrath and indignation ; he did not send after him a minister of vengeance to torment him. The father's heart was all the time full of pity, and his compassion was ready to receive him, on his return. When and where, let us ask, did this prodigal meet the woe, which our text denounces against him who striveth with his Maker ? See the wretch, yonder, among swine ! fain would he satisfy the cravings of hunger with the husks which the unclean swine eat ; but no man giveth unto him. This is truly a woeful case ; but his own folly has brought it on him ; nor can a father's pity prevent the dire calamity so long as the son maintains his strife against him.

In this woeful case of the prodigal, the impious, the profane, the immoral among men, have a mirror presented to their eyes, in which they may see themselves, and clearly discern the sure consequences, which must attend a life of disobedience to the commandments of God.

On the other hand, the question occurs, when and where did the elder son meet the woe, which his striving with his father procured for him ? Look at the circumstances set forth in the parable. In his own house is his father, his brother, and the rest of the family. The fatted calf is dressed, and feasting and joyful merriment are there. But where is he ? Is he among the happy ones ? Is he shouting for joy that his brother is alive and at home ? Does he thank his father for his kindness to his long lost brother ? No, he is angry ; he will

not go into his own house ; he stands without, and debars himself from the sweetest enjoyments. Does the father raise against this angry son a glittering sword of vengeance ? Does his brow knit into wrath against his unhappy child ? No , but he goes out to him with all the kindness of an affectionate father, and entreats him to come in.

In this instance of woful infelicity, the self righteous, who justify themselves and despise others, have a true mirror placèd before them, in which they may trace every feature in their character. They are confident, as was the elder son, that they serve God faithfully. And they are also equally confident that they do not now receive a due recompense for their hard services. They are sure if God should show favour to those whom they call sinners, and whom they despise, he would be unjust. And they even say, if sinners are received to divine favour, they desire not to bear them company. Thus they, as did the Pharisees of old, strive with their Maker, despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. But after their hardness and impenitent hearts treasure up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath. Like the ancient Pharisees, they are willing to compass sea and land to make proselytes ; but this on condition, that when proselytes are made, they must be two fold more the children of hell, than themselves. For a pretence they make long prayers ; but this is to cover their wickedness in devouring widows' houses.

The enemies of Jesus never strove with a more determined zeal against him and his doctrine of universal, impartial goodness, than do the enemies of the same doctrine in our times. Let us look at an instance. A believer in this heart cheering doctrine brings to its opposers the testimony of St. Paul to Timothy ; God " will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." This precious declaration, with a multi-

tude of others of like import, presents a fountain of living waters to the joyful eyes of the humble believer in Jesus. By this open fountain he stands, and cries in the language of God's ancient prophet, 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.' Now commences a most determined strife with the plain and clear sense of God's word. The opposer first attacks the passage by contending that God has two wills, one his secret will of decree, the other his revealed will; and though he has revealed his will, that all men should finally obtain salvation, he has decreed that a part only should be saved. We have neither time nor occasion to show the impropriety of such reasoning; what we wish now to bring into view is the woe, which the opposer of God's word procures for himself, by thus striving against it. What has he effected by this violent struggle? He has forsaken this fountain of living waters, and hewn out a cistern that can hold no water. Let him retire with his own explanation of the text, and when alone, let him seek consolation to his own heart from the passage, with which he has used such freedom. Can he find any? No, his cistern is a broken one; it holds no water. According to his own explanation, he has no assurance that his Creator has not decreed his everlasting condemnation. In such a belief we find many unhappy, disconsolate sufferers, struggling under the weight of sinking despair, destitute of any solid hope in divine favour.

Another opposer of divine truth will strive with his Maker's word, by contending that the text,

under consideration, only expresses God's willingness that all men should be saved, not meaning that it is really his will to effect it. He will allow that God is willing that all men should be saved, if they will comply with the conditions of salvation. Here is another way to hew out a broken cistern. And we see thousands mourning over their imperfections, and trembling with fearful apprehensions that they may not have complied with the conditions on which depends their everlasting interest. Now it is not for the purpose of bringing such woes on themselves, that they thus strive against the gracious declarations of divine truth, but because they love not their neighbours as they love themselves. All this strife is designed to exclude some of their fellow creatures from those heavenly enjoyments which they would be glad to make their own. But by excluding others, they cut off their own confidence, and procure for themselves that woeful despondency which is the natural and necessary consequence of their strife. We might go on and instance many declarations of God's universal, efficient goodness, and show that by striving against their most plain and obvious sense, thousands of professing christians bring on themselves the gloom of despair. Truly did Jonah say, being taught by his striving with his Maker, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

will any inquire where we shall find the woe, which our text denounces on those who strive with their Maker? We shall always find it where we find the strife. Look into that miserable family, where discord and strife rage, and you witness a scene of woe which language would fail to describe. —Look again where neighbours live in strife, and you see the woe in all its horrors. Examine all the haunts of vice in the land, where strife against our Maker's law constantly rages, and you see the woe consuming the strength of youth, debasing our nature, and rendering desolate the fondest

hopes which the heart of man delights to cherish. Imagination has nothing to do in this case. Nor does our subject embrace the fables which craft has invented of another world. All we have said is solemn reality, and its truth is confirmed by universal experience.—AMEN.

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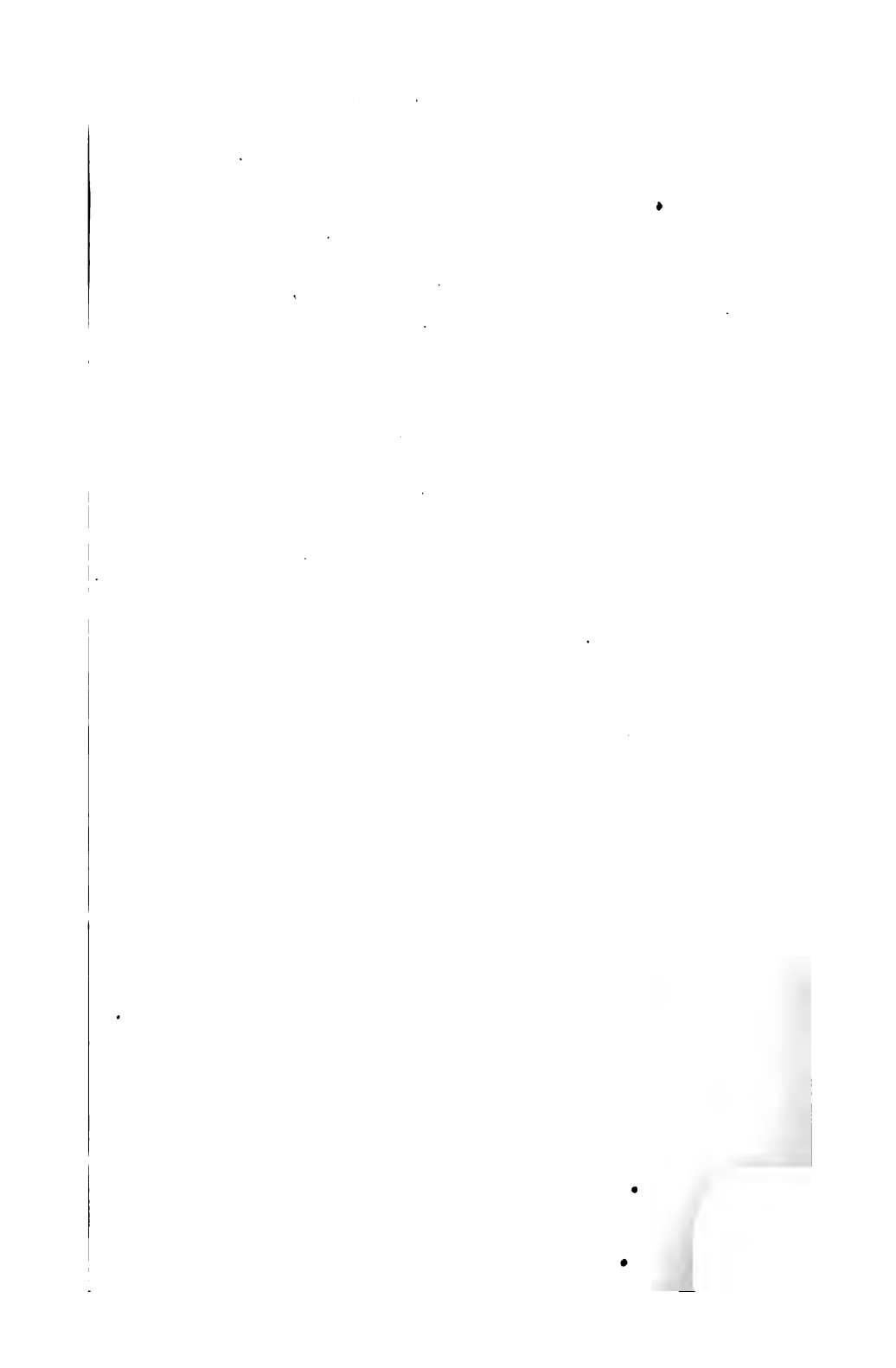
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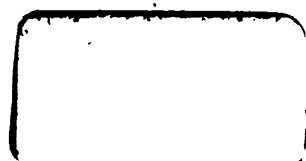
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